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Lectures on the Gospels.

For the Sundays and Chief Festivals

OF THE

CHURCH YEAR.

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN 16 : 16–22. A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? We cannot tell what he saith?

Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice : and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow : but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.

THE Gospel for this morning continues the strain of the Saviour's tenderness and devotion to his people. All his resurrection glory, and departure to heavenly exaltation, so far from drawing away his interest from his earthly followers, are connected with ministrations for their good, and evidences of his undying affection for them. The passage is comprehensive, and looks onward through the whole course of the Church's earthly experiences. A two-sided picture is presented—a dark side, and a bright side—both of which concern us, and

all Christians, quite as deeply as the disciples to whom the words were first addressed. In some of the primary applications, the apostles alone were particularly concerned; but the principal scope of the text respects the whole period of the Gospel, and has regard to us with the rest.

I. The Dark Side of the Picture.

"*A little while and ye shall not see me.*" This is the first item. The Saviour here alluded to his nearing crucifixion, against which he desired to have his disciples prepared, that they might not be utterly overwhelmed when it should occur. In the course of a few days he was to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies, condemned, and put to death. He was to be taken from them, and quite hidden out of their sight. The grave was to close upon him, and a termination put to his earthly life. This he foresaw and foreknew; and of this he spake. In a little while they were not to see him any more, as they then saw and knew him.

2. As the result of this, his disappearance in death, they were to "*weep and lament.*" There would be great rejoicing among his enemies. The world was to triumph, as it always does, in the prospect of freeing itself from the presence and claims of the Lord Jesus. Jerusalem's godless officials and wicked rabble were to exult together in having made an end of the despised and troublesome Nazarene. But his disciples were to be wrung with sorrow and dismay.

We know how literally all this was fulfilled. The machinations of the Jews were successful. Jesus was arrested and the disciples scattered in terror. He was condemned and slain, and their souls were filled with grief, not only at the loss of so precious a friend, but at the clouds and confusion which it brought to their most cherished hopes. By one stroke, all that they had been led so joyfully to believe, was dashed to the earth. What to do or think they knew not. Their deepest religious persuasions were all of a sudden overturned, and they found themselves in a state of mental distraction, doubt and torture, the saddest conceivable. They trusted that it had been he who was to redeem Israel; and now he was ignominiously put out of the world, and their fond hopes were miserably quenched. The world triumphed, and they did "lament and weep."

3. But even after their refreshment and reassurance by his glorious resurrection, there awaited them a still further privation. Though blessed with the sight of him after the little while that he was in the sepulchre, there was to intervene another little while, and he should then "*go to the Father.*" This time they were to have a better understanding of the facts, and many compensatory gifts; but still it was to be to them a bereavement, a leaving to trial and affliction. Even after the ascension, and the descent of the Comforter, they were still to feel the absence of their Lord. "*Ye shall be sorrowful,*" was true of them again, and was to be true during all the period of

his personal absence. It is Christ's word to the Church, in all these ages since his feet last touched the summit of Olivet till they shall touch it again, "*Ye now have sorrow.*"

It has become the fashion to look for a state of advancement in the Gospel, and the general culture of the world by its means, which shall realize the picture of a golden and happy age, when the cross shall be no more an offence, and when peace and righteousness shall cover the world with much of the joy and blessedness of heaven. And all this is expected in the absence of Christ, as the fruit of human endeavors, by means of existing instrumentalities. Nothing could be more in conflict with the words of Jesus, and the teachings of holy Scripture. His word is, "*Ye now have sorrow;*" and this "NOW" stretches down to the time of which he says, "*I will see you again.*" Our Church therefore condemns those who spread abroad Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall get the sovereignty in the world, and the wicked be brought under in every place. On the other hand she also affirms, that the Church is never in this life to attain a position of universal triumph and prosperity, but is to remain depressed, and subject to afflictions and adversities, until the period of the resurrection of the dead, when Christ himself shall come again in visible glory and power, to receive to himself them that are his. Until the day of judgment, Luther maintains that the cross must always be borne by us, that the majority

will always be on the side of persecutors, and that those who hold to the contrary hold to a delusion of the devil. In none of the authorized creeds of Christendom do we find it either implied or taught, that the Church is to triumph over this world prior to the coming again of the Lord Jesus. The parable of the wheat and the tares stands out against such a doctrine, like a continent against the sea; as also that of the net. The tares grow until the harvest, which is the end of the world. The bad fish continue till the net comes to shore, and the judgment sits. The Saviour's prophecy in Matt. 24 and 25, which stretches from the period of the text to the final consummation, knows nothing of it, and leaves no room for it. Daniel's visions of the career of persecuting Gentile sovereignties, which he contemplated onward to the sitting of the judgment, absolutely exclude it. The Saviour's addresses to the Church as a "little flock"—a persecuted minority—a people whose life, in all ages of this dispensation, had its exemplification in his experiences, and never more than a candlestick in the midst of surrounding and abounding darkness—are against it. The apostolic descriptions of the mystery of iniquity and antichristian developments, which were then already active, and which were to augment with time, and reach their highest disastrous bloom in the last days of this dispensation, and be destroyed only when Christ himself shall be revealed to judge the living and the dead—demonstrate its impossibility. The fact that the last days are

everywhere shown to be the worst days—days the same in character as the days of Noah and Lot—days of unbelief, apostasy, and organized rebellion against God and his Christ, both in Church and State—days of peril, violence, and persecuting iniquity—days of false Christs and false prophets, from whose deceits the very elect are hardly safe—days of wars, and rumors of wars, of distress of nations with perplexity, and of tribulation which shall make men wish themselves dead for relief from it,—all of which is so clearly and fully foretold, stamps the fond idea as utter delusion. If it is a golden age when "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived;" if it is a golden age when the professed Church shall say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and knoweth not that she is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" if it is a golden, happy age when the beastly prophet of hell shall sway the world, and deceive them that dwell upon the earth by means of his lying wonders, and cause all who will not worship the image of the beast to be killed; then, *but then only*, do the holy Scriptures authorize us to expect a golden happy age in this world prior to the judgment and the resurrection of the dead.

And the outward estate of God's true people, in all these ages since his ascension, has been but little more than the realization of the words, "*ye now have sorrow.*" Consider how speedily the Christian Church was driven out from the land of

its birth—how its members were scattered abroad over the earth—how its apostles were murdered—how the edicts of the Cæsars trailed its path with blood and fire—how enthroned apostasy made itself drunk with the blood of the saints—how the blessed Reformers suffered—and how Idolatry, and Atheism, and Infidelity, and perverted Science, and false Philosophy, and worldly pride, and heresy, and schism, and turmoil from within and from without, have marred its prosperity, and troubled its peace, and menaced its extinction. What is it all but what the Saviour said, "*ye now have sorrow!*"

Nor is the thing any better in our day. People have much to say about the glorious advances that the world has made; but how true still is the old hymn which our fathers sung?

God hath his blessed Gospel given,
To fit our needy souls for heaven;
But most the precious treasure spurn,
Nor care its saving truths to learn.

True search for the pure word of God,
By greed and lust for earthly good
Is overborne; and yet men say,
Danger and doom are far away!

Inventions daily multiply
Ungodliness to deify,
And by mere human might to seize
Whate'er may bless, whate'er may please.

The Christian name is greatly praised,
Yet few to pious lives are raised;
In truth, God's laws are all defied,
And man exults in godless pride.

Where now can brother's love be found?
All lands with robbery abound.
There is no faithfulness, no faith;
"Give me but money," each one saith

Feasting is now the world's chief trade,
And villainies all ranks pervade.
From all restraint each would be free,
And earth is full of infamy.

II. But there is another and a brighter side to this picture. Along with these foreannouncements of sorrow, the Saviour also gives foreannouncements of joy.

The first is implied in the whole character of the address, and underlies all its particulars. It is to the effect, that these unfavorable aspects of things, and all the afflictions spoken of, are part of a gracious system, to whose ultimate completion and success they are all subservient. It behooved Christ to suffer and to be taken from his disciples by violence and death, notwithstanding the dismay and anguish which it at the time entailed upon them. Nay, it was for their own salvation that he was taken, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations. Luke 24:46, 47. And so after his reappearance from the dead, it was expedient for them that he should go away, as neither his work, nor their gracious endowments, would be complete without it. It was the necessary and unavoidable agony to give birth to a sublimer joy. Better that the disciples should have their hearts wrung for a little while, than that their sins

should not be atoned for, nor the world's guilt expiated. Better also that Christ should go and complete his work in heaven, and by his successes there secure the gifts of the Holy Ghost for his Church, and let his servants wrestle meanwhile with the powers of worldly evil in taking out a people for his name, than that he should at once ascend his judgment throne, and cut short the day of grace to the benighted children of men.

And so in reference to all the afflictions and trials which are permitted to come upon the Church, and in all the sufferings of the saints in the course of their earthly pilgrimage. They are in some sort necessary to the ends in view. They are part of a great system of good. They belong to a deep economy, in which after all it is better that we should encounter them, than that we should be spared them. They all work together for a higher ultimate good. In the final summing up, the balance is infinitely on the side of enduring them, rather than to have them dispensed with. They seem exceedingly hard while they last. It is not easy to believe that they are good, or that there is any profit in the hard straits and necessities to which providence sometimes reduces us. But it is the truth. There are no accidents in God's economy. Everything is well considered, and has its place and mission. And God's arrangements are always wiser and better than we can think or plan. And the most conclusive arguments compel to the belief, that the time will come when the greatest sufferers among

God's saints on earth, will look back upon the darkest hours of their lives as the most precious in which they have lived. We never hear of the apostles lamenting the death or the ascension of Christ, when they once came to understand it, though at the time they were quite overwhelmed by its occurrence. Neither do we find them accounting it a hard lot that they were made to endure such trials. Though in perils, in stripes, in imprisonments, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in weariness and pain, in persecution and martyrdom, they counted it all joy, and cheerfully endured, because they were persuaded that it was all to their good, and wisely arranged to work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Nor is there a pain or privation which a true disciple suffers on earth, which is not so much the more added to his eternal treasures, and to his capacity to enjoy them forever.

> Midst crosses, faith her triumph knows,
> The palm-tree pressed more vigorous grows;
> Treading the grapes beneath one's feet,
> The stream flows fuller and more sweet.
> In trouble, virtues grow and shine,
> Like pearls beneath the ocean brine.

2. But the text has also some more specific elements of comfort for the troubled and sorrowing disciples. Though Christ was to disappear, and they were to lament and weep, he engaged that they should see him again. And they did see him again. To their infinite relief and comfort he reappeared after his death, and spoke over

them the benediction of his blessed peace. For the space of forty days he communed with them in all loving condescension, and instructed and confirmed their hearts in the great things of the kingdom of God. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." They felt themselves begotten again to a lively hope, and were filled with invincible courage and happiness. They could now endure to see him go to the Father, and cheerfully meet what sorrows yet awaited them in the world, not only because they had the assurance that it would all be overruled for good, but more, because he said, "*I will see you again.*"

And precious is the legacy which the Saviour has left to his Church in this promise. It was a glad thing to see Jesus even in his humiliation. We sometimes wish that we had lived in those days, that we might have looked upon his face, and heard the tones of his voice. If we could refer to but one slight glimpse of him, we would treasure it as a blessed thing. We would recur to it with ever fresh delight. If there were now a spot on earth where he might be seen, even as he then was, millions would spare no expense or pains to visit it, crying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus." And if it would be a high and lawful gratification to see Christ as he once lived on earth, how sublime the sight of him in the glory and beauty of his kingdom! How blessed to the queen of Sheba was her interview with Solomon! "When she had *seen* his wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of

his servants, and the standing of his ministers, and their apparel, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her;" she fainted for very admiration. Flesh and blood was too weak to support her emotion. Now she could say, it was a true report which she had heard, and that the half had not been told her. Never could that vision pass from her delighted memory. It was forever a sunny spot in her recollection, and the happiest moment of her life. But Solomon in all his glory was but a feeble earthly type of the enthroned Messiah. And if to see Solomon's glory was so rapturous a thing, what will it be to see Jesus, and to be made partaker of his glory! Oh, what a glow of heavenly bliss will it impart to these souls of ours to be permitted to "*see him as he is*," and to join him in the communion of an eternal fellowship! Yet such is the nature of his promise, "Yet a little while and ye shall see me." "Ye now have sorrow, but I will see you again." Then shall all doubts and misgivings be dissipated. Then shall all timid fears be cast out. Then shall each drooping heart be satisfied, and all its sorrows turned to joy.

3. Nor is it a transient or ephemeral bliss. The further word of the Saviour is, "*your joy no man taketh from you.*" From the time that Jesus rose and ascended, faith beheld its portion forever secure. No more peradventure encompassed it. There was much that man could do. Much havoc

of the saints could the hand of persecuting power effect. It could drive the disciples out of the synagogues. It could expel them from their homes. It could strip them of all their earthly goods and comforts. It could send out malicious tongues to slander their names and dog their steps. It could bind them with chains, and lock them in prisons, and scourge them with lashes, and torture them in flames, and nail them to crosses, and cut off their heads on state-blocks. But it could not for one moment touch the portion laid up for them in the promises of Jesus, or grind out the joyous hopes which had been kindled in their hearts. Come what might, their triumphant challenge was: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, was able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8:35–39.

And heaven once gained is gained forever. All earthly things are transient. There is not a fortune, but it will be scattered and disappear. There is not a kingdom, but it shall be brought to nought. There is not a home, but it shall be rent and turned to desolation. Even prophecies shall fail, and tongues cease, and knowledge vanish away. But there is one thing which shall live

on unharmed amid all changes, and undamaged by the disasters and vicissitudes which attend all else. The damps of the tomb cannot extinguish it. God has stamped his own immortality upon it. It is lit for everlasting years. It is itself a pulsation of eternity. It is the joy which the believer has in Christ Jesus. *That* no man can take away.

4. And whatever trials or privations may have to be endured in the absence of the Saviour, their end is soon reached. Jesus says: "*A little while, and ye shall see me.*" The race is short. The days of waiting will soon be passed. The glad hope will not be long deferred. Ages have rolled around since the promise was given; but they are nothing as compared with the eternity which is before us. And if as many ages more should intervene before that promise is fulfilled, it will still be only "a little while"—a mere trifling fraction alongside of the countless sum of ages to which they are the prelude.

But it will not be ages till the promise is fulfilled. Even as men reckon time, the blessed day is "*at hand.*" Everything combines to assure us that the period of waiting and suffering for the people of God is nearly over. In many ways Jesus is now repeating to his Church the consoling words: "*A little while, and ye shall see me.*" Any of these passing days we may hear his voice ringing from the heavens, "Lo! I COME!" And O that we might hear it to-day, to-morrow, this

week, the sooner the better; for then our sorrow will be turned into joy, and our heart will rejoice, and our joy no man shall take from us.

Let us then be comforted in our sorrows, and quickened in our faith and prayers by these things. The whole message of this day's Gospel is meant thus to reconcile us to our afflictions, and to fortify us against despair. Let us therefore exhort one another daily, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. Heb. 10: 25.

Yes, when the spring-breeze blows,
And the gay garden blooms,
And the wide forest waves with budding green,
And the freed streamlet warbles through the broom
And the clear air takes up the happy note
Of skylark singing to the rosy dawn,
    Then let us meet;
And meeting, cheer each other's weary heart
With the dear hope of everlasting spring,
And the fair land that spreads beneath the slopes
    Of the eternal hills,
    Where nothing dies;
    Where nothing fades;
But all is without ending or decay,
    The sky, the sun, the light,
    The peace, the truth, the love,
And, above all, the joy!

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

John 16 : 5–15. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

TO sensitive hearts, united by the nameless and numberless ties of endeared fellowship, there is something very painful in the thought of separation. It is like taking from the soul a portion of itself—a mutilation of one's life, sometimes quite unsupportable. This the more true, in proportion as the departing one has been the object of precious hopes, and the centre of great expectations.

It is not strange, therefore, that the disciples of Jesus were painfully affected by his repeated announcements, that he was about to leave them. He had won upon their esteem, reverence, and love, as none but himself could win. They had

not only learned to adore and love him, but to lean upon him as the great fulfiller of their highest hopes, and the hopes of all the good in all ages. They had relinquished everything for him. They had given him their whole mind and heart, as God's Son, and man's Saviour. And that he should now leave them, and go whither they could not come, was a thing full of darkness and affliction. It involved not only the rupture of their dearest earthly ties, but, as far as they then could see, the discomfiture of their fondest religious anticipations. It presented to them the prospect of being flung upon an adverse world, with a cause despised and sinking, and with no adequate wisdom to guide, or arm to help, or hope to cheer. It was more than they could endure without being wounded most painfully. It overwhelmed them with anxiety and trouble. And so much had they become the prey of their sorrowful emotions, that they no longer had either courage or curiosity even to ask for an explanation.

But, after all, there was really no reason to be so distressed and disheartened. There was nothing in the nature of the case to warrant it. With the views and feelings they then had, it was perhaps impossible for them not to feel disappointed and hurt; but had they been able to take in the whole truth, it would have been just as impossible to be so disturbed. People are always disposed to interpret too unfavorably what is dark and beclouding to their immediate enjoyments and hopes, and to make themselves sorrow by brood-

ing too much on their sorrows. If they would only keep up their confidence and inquiry, and not allow their search for light to become deadened by their griefs, they would often find that things which they take as the saddest, are really among the gladdest, and the most necessary to their highest peace and triumph.

The Saviour, therefore, begins his discourse in this morning's Gospel, by gently, and somewhat complainingly, rebuking his disciples for their unmanly yielding to the sadness of their imperfect views without inquiring further into his movements. He had told them of his coming departure for their own good, and with a view to have their thoughts led into deeper and truer conceptions of his office and work. But instead of keeping up with his sacred prompting, they stopped at the most afflictive point, and proposed to dwell under the clouds, instead of quickening their interest to find the light, whilst the great fountain of light was yet with them. "Now," says he, "I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart."

Too much curiosity is often impertinent and reprehensible. It is the fault of many to wish to pry into matters which they had much better never know. But there is one direction in which inquiry is never out of place. And strange enough, just where it is most fitting and desirable, there it is the feeblest and most scarce. We can never

be too anxious to know about Christ, the reasons of his movements, and the explanations of his doings. It is the will of our Saviour that we should search, and inquire diligently, what, or what manner of time, the Spirit hath signified in its testimony of the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow. It was these things of which "the prophets searched and inquired," and these things even the angels desired to look into. 1 Pet. 1:10–12. Here anxious interest, and casting about for light, are not only legitimate, but necessary to our proper instruction, comfort, and salvation. Here, if any one lack wisdom, the direction is, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." James 1:5.

But just here it is that the human heart is most sluggish in its inquiries. People spend their lives studying and searching into questions of political and domestic economy, finance, commerce, agriculture, education. They examine, toil, and experiment, touching the character, qualities, relations, and classifications of rocks, metals, soils, plants, insects, reptiles, animals, birds, and flowers. They explore, and labor, and put themselves to every expense and inconvenience, to make and test theories about the world, the economy of the material universe, or what is in the remote corners of the earth and the depths of the sea. They rummage the darkest histories of the past, and exhaust their powers speculating upon the phenomena of human life, and perplex themselves about a thou-

sand things, in reference to which the best wisdom is as useless as it is scanty. But when it comes to the great and mighty movements of the Lord of all, the incarnation of Jehovah for the redemption of a world laboring under the curse of sin, and those moral and spiritual administrations, without which all the universe must be as nothing to us; they have no questions to ask, and no inquiries of living interest to propound. And to many an energetic sage and earnest searcher in departments not a thousandth part the account of this, the wronged and burdened Saviour is compelled to say: "I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?"

And especially in times of affliction, when the good Lord seems to withdraw himself, and leave us to ourselves and our weaknesses, does the Saviour find occasion to complain of the deadness of men, paralyzed with their griefs, when they ought to be inquiring of him about the reasons and objects of them. He has his explanations for all our days of darkness, and an antidote for every pain or privation we suffer, if only we had the faith and interest to ask after it. But the human heart is such an inveterate doubter, and so ready to give way before what is afflictive and dark, that we often miss the very consolations which are at hand, just because we are too dull and despondent to make the requisite inquiry. The Saviour withdraws, and we are overwhelmed as if we had encountered some dreadful calamity, and give up without asking why it is, when what we lament

may be one of the very conditions of our highest good. It was so in the case of the first disciples, and it is so still.

Very compassionate, however, is our blessed Redeemer. Whilst he rebukes the leaden dulness of his disciples, he yet pities them, and gives unasked what they should have sought. And precious is the consolation which he pours upon their sorrowful hearts.

There were two points particularly afflictive in the minds of the depressed apostles. The one was, that Jesus was about to leave them. This they could neither understand nor bear. It was a blow under which they found it impossible to stand up. But to this was added the seeming hopelessness of the cause of which they were to be the only representatives. How could they maintain themselves in the face of persecution and death? And how were they to succeed in winning confessors when the Master was gone, and people should think it a divine service to kill every one of them? To these two aspects of their grief and discouragement does he therefore adapt his discourse. As they respected him as truthful, and regarded him as one who would not deceive them with misrepresentations, he puts his declarations on his honor and veracity, and assures them with all solemnity, as to the real facts of the case.

1. He tells them that his departure from them, however sad, was for their good. "*I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away.*" With-

out this departure, the Divine plan could not be fulfilled, and what they had so fondly hoped of Christ could never have been realized. It was a part of the great redemptive scheme, by which to secure to them still higher advantages. It was to have results, both in heaven and on earth, outweighing in blessedness all the comforts of his bodily presence. And whatever sense of bereavement, perplexity and disappointment it might entail upon them for the time, it was to be more than recompensed in what was to come of it.

And what was true of that particular bereavement, is true of everything that Christ's disciples have to suffer on earth. What men call misfortunes and calamities, are not such to the Christian. They may inflict sorrow for the time, but they are real treasures after all. Something better than exemption from them is to be wrought by them. They are *expedient for us.* They are meant for the real augmentation of our comfort. Their mission, however grievous for the present, is a mission of blessing. Amid all the complicated and multiplied sufferings of the Apostle Paul, it was his undying conviction, that "our light affliction (*light* as compared with the blessedness to be gained), which is but for a moment (a *moment* as compared with eternity), worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4:17. And whatever our particular trials and sorrows in this world may be, if only we remain steadfast in the faith, we may well count it all joy, and set it down as so much added to our abiding blessedness.

2. But Christ's departure was as necessary as it was expedient. "*For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.*" I do not find here what some have affirmed, to wit, that the visible presence of Christ with his Church, and the invisible gifts and ministrations of the Holy Ghost, cannot coexist; or that the presence of the one necessarily requires the absence of the other. That the disappearance of Christ, and his assumption to glory, on the one hand, were necessary to the advent of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter and guide of the earthly Church on the other, is unmistakably declared. But that Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot both be present with the Church at the same time, is not taught by this text, nor by any other in the Scripture. Jesus was present in the temple with Simeon; yet of that aged saint it is written: "The Holy Ghost was upon him." Luke 2:25. Jesus was present and engaged in his public ministry before John the Baptist concluded his work; yet the angel testifies concerning John that he was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Luke 1:15. Jesus himself described the wilful unbelief of the Pharisees of his day as "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost;" Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10; and affirmed that even then God was more willing to "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," than earthly parents "to give good gifts unto their children." Luke 11:13. The truth is, that the Holy Ghost, in some measure, has always been in the world. There

never was a time when the people of God did not enjoy his ministrations. This is as true of the period that Christ was personally present on earth as at any other. Nay, the very wonders which the Saviour wrought are referred to "the Spirit of God." Matt. 12:28.

It is true, that there was a fulness and largeness of the gift of the Holy Ghost dependent upon the ascension of Christ, which never was the possession of the Church before the day of Pentecost; not, indeed, because the personal presence of Christ hindered it, or was incompatible with it, but because there were acts and features of his work which could only be performed by his disappearance from the earth, and on which this enlargement of the Spirit's influences were conditioned. The glorious testimony of Christ's acceptance as our Redeemer could not be given, until that acceptance had transpired; and that acceptance could only transpire by Christ's appearance in the court of heaven, and the formal approval of his work.

There are laws and fitnesses of things to which even the Son of God was subject, in his mediatorial capacity, and with which he had to comply before redemption could be fully set forth. His incarnation and his obedience unto death marked some of the great requisites in the case. His resurrection from the dead marked another. And still a third, was connected with his entry into the holiest, as typified under the ceremonial law by the entrance of the high priest within the veil with the blood of sacrifice, before the benediction could

come upon the congregation of Israel. Just the exact reasons for such order, or just what specific end was subserved or met by this formal entry of our High Priest into the holiest of all, it is not in our power to describe. But we know that such an entry within the veil was necessary; and that without it the work would have been incomplete, the terms of salvation not fully met, and no such glorious testimony of it as the descent of the Comforter could have been given. It was, therefore, a necessity that Christ should go away to the Father, and have his work, so to speak, approved and ratified in heaven, before the Holy Ghost could come. So that if the sorrowing disciples laid any account upon salvation, it ought to have been a joy to them, that their Lord was about to go and secure it, rather than a subject to overwhelm them with grief.

3. There is also added a specific promise. "If I go not away, *the Comforter* will not come unto you; *but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*" This promised One is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth. Not a mere attribute or quality, but a personal Divine subsistence, capable of performing acts, and having intelligence, consciousness, will, and power of his own—in theological phraseology, "the third person in the Godhead;"—for "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." 1 John 5:7.

The original word rendered "*Comforter*," cannot be fully translated by any one English term. *Par-*

aclete, includes all that is most important in a whole series of words. A *paraclete* is an instructor, witness, monitor, helper, guide, as well as comforter. And what the Saviour promises, is the descent upon his followers of a personal Spirit of divine power, to serve them as a spirit of instruction in the truth, of testimony as to the faith, of guidance as to the right, of strength for every requisite to their calling and office, and of consolation, efficiency, and joy beyond anything that had hitherto been. It is elsewhere described as an endowment with power from on high—the manifestation in, upon, and through them of a spiritual Divine presence, which was to energize, establish, equip, lead, and prosper them as the ministers of a new economy, inspire them with light and truth, and lift them far above the level of the unbelieving world around them.

The particular work of the Paraclete, or the particular results of his promised advent, are twofold, first as respects the world, and second as respects the Church.

"And when he is come, he will reprove [convince] *the world* of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:"—not of sin, righteousness, and judgment in general, as many have erroneously taken the promise; but of particular sin, righteousness, and judgment: "Of sin, because they believe not on me." Of sin in general, natural conscience is quite sufficient to convict every man. No special gift of the Holy Ghost is necessary for that. Wherever a human being is found, there is a moral

sense, however stupefied, yet more or less troubled with guilt, and a certain fearful looking for of judgment. The most besotted heathen show it; and everywhere the anxious cry is heard, in one form or another, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Blood flowing in every land, altars loaded with victims, smoking hecatombs, lacerating hooks, torturing pilgrimages, muttering priests, and wailing worshippers crowding about idol shrines, and worlds of unspoken anxieties and inward fears, all unite in showing us how deep and powerful in all nations and ages is man's sense of sin and need of propitiation and forgiveness. But, until the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, who among all earth's generations was ever convinced that it was a mortal sin not to believe in Jesus Christ? This was a specific and peculiar form of guilt of which no one is ever conscious except by the Holy Ghost, and his illuminating testimony concerning the Christ. It is only by his demonstrative proofs that Jesus is the Christ, and the rightful Lord of the human conscience, that it appears as a deadly sin not to receive him as such.

And so in reference to righteousness. As it is the natural and universal conviction that "there

is none righteous; no, not one;" and that "if any man say that he hath no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him;" how could Jesus be regarded as an exception, or as having fulfilled all righteousness to the everlasting justification of all believers, except by some such new demonstration from heaven as was furnished in the gift of the Holy Ghost to his followers? Jesus said, the Paraclete "will convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father." Could the Father approve and receive an unrighteous man? Certainly not. But how was the world to know that the Father had approved and received Christ and his work of satisfaction for the sins of the world? The answer is, by the advent of the Holy Ghost. There is the testimony of the Father, and the abiding divine demonstration to the world, not only of Christ's personal righteousness before God, but of the entire satisfactoriness of his righteousness for the justification forever of all who believe in him. That was the miraculous and invincible proof that Jesus is the just one, and that in him is righteousness, accepted for all who accept him.

And so, also, in reference to judgment:—not judgment in general, in the way of accountability for sin, and the punishment of guilt; for the natural fears of men and devils are already the certain prophecies of that;—but of a specific aspect of judgment;—"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, to break his dominion over men, to subvert his empire, and to eject him from

his usurped possessions. But how was the world to know that the work and success of Christ were adequate to that end, or that a successful blow had been struck upon the base confederation by which the race was held? The proof of it was in the marvellous manifestations made through the descent of the Holy Ghost. This was the glorious signal of God himself that Satan was now a vanquished foe, that the judgment upon him was effectually begun, and that through Christ his whole dominion is to be swept forever from the face of the earth.

Very precious, then, in these aspects, was the Saviour's promise of the Comforter to his trembling and disheartened disciples.

But it was even still more precious as it respected *their own personal experiences*. "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; and he shall show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Blessed promise! They still had many things to learn; but were yet too much entangled with their imperfect views and unmaning sorrows to hear them. Nevertheless, they were to be as competently instructed in Christ's absence as if he should remain with them. The Spirit of truth was to lead them into all truth.

Note, then, the heavenly warrant we have for the absolute truth of what these apostles have written for our learning. Either they were inspired men, or Christ did not say the truth. He

promised that they should be made supernaturally acquainted with the full truth. The very Spirit of truth was to guide them "*into all truth.*" Everything concerning Christ they were adequately to know; nor were "things to come" to be hidden from them. And if Christ told the truth, what they have taught us is the truth—the dictation of the Holy Ghost. We need not wait for further revelations. We have no occasion for Swedenborgian visions, Mormon bibles, or communications from the dead. Christ's word to his apostles was, that they should be guided into all truth, and be shown things to come. As Christ is true, that promise has been fulfilled. Every iota of knowledge necessary to us and our eternal comfort and consolation they were taught, and have given to the Church as its possession forever. From them has flowed down even to us a stream of pure truth, like a very river of life, bearing to all ages, and kindreds, and tongues of mankind the waters of salvation, and the full testimony of the one God,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Note again, from this subject, the greatness of our privileges in living under the present dispensation. We have inherited the light glowing in its meridian splendor. For us, the stream of truth and salvation flows in its highest tide of earthly fulness. The ancient fathers were not so highly blessed. They had light, but it was twilight. They had the Holy Ghost, but only as the star which pointed the way to where the true Light of the world was born. They had a temple, and a

priesthood, and the hallowed symbol of Jehovah's presence; but we have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to a temple built of living stones, burnished with brighter radiance than golden spires or gilded domes.

Finally, let us find in this subject the stimulation to be more alive in our prayers, and efforts to possess the blessed promise the Saviour left his Church. It is for and to *us*, as well as the apostles, that the gracious assurance is given: "If I depart, I will send the Comforter unto you. He will guide you. He will show you things to come."

Leave us not comfortless,
  O Thou, our risen Lord!
But send Thy Spirit down, to bless
  And guide us with Thy Word!

By him Thy gifts impart,
  Light, peace, and joy, and love;—
Seal of adoption in our heart—
  Earnest of heaven above.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN 16 : 23–33. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.

At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

IT is fabled of a certain bird, that it always reserves its most melodious notes for the last, and yields up its life in ecstasies of pathetic song. What is fabled respecting the bird, was sublime reality in the case of our blessed Lord. His great farewell discourse, the conclusion of which is now before us, is a thesaurus of delightful encouragement to faith, holy steadfastness, hope amid sorrow, and patience under all the privations of time.

He here shows himself in tenderest beauty, and opens up to his exposed and troubled disciples fountains of comfort and consolation, which ever flow, and from which the Church may ever drink.

The Saviour here speaks of a particular period —a day—"*that day.*" He had spoken of the same before. It is the day which was to succeed the night of His Passion—the day when the Comforter should come—the day of the Holy Ghost, and his ministrations of light and power—a day of indefinite duration, covering the whole period of Christ's personal absence. It was to begin with the scenes of Pentecost, but was not to be confined to one age or generation. The day of the Holy Ghost is the whole day of grace, and runs coeval with the entire period of the Church. The blessings, and succors, and gifts, promised in that day, belong to all the Christian centuries. They are the common inheritance of all believers, in all ages and countries. They are proposed to all willing hearts. And what is here spoken is also spoken to us, even to us, and to as many as believe in Jesus, till the end of the world.

Let us look, then, at some of these gracious announcements of our departing Lord, and seek to edify ourselves by the contemplation of them.

I. *The Saviour here sets before us an accessible throne of Grace.* "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

In all ages, God has been gracious, and willing

to be entreated, and ready to hear the cries of his people. Jacob prayed, and the revenge of Esau was stayed. Moses cried to God, and the sea divided; he lifted up his hands to the Almighty, and Amalek was discomfited. Joshua prayed, and Achan was discovered. David prayed, and victory came. Isaiah and Hezekiah prayed, and the cohorts of Israel's foes slept the sleep of death, slain without hand. Daniel prayed, and the lions lost their ferocity toward him, and angels came with visions from God. Elijah prayed, and drought came; and prayed again, and the rains descended. Elisha prayed, and the waters of Jordan parted; and prayed again, and life returned to the deceased child of his friend. But never until "*that day*," of which the Saviour here speaks, was there such a freeness and largeness of access, and promise on this subject. The words are absolute and without limitation, and put all the resources of Omnipotence at the command of earnest and believing prayer. Thus, as the sainted Spener used to say, every Christian has put into his hands a blessed order-book, with the name of Jesus written at the bottom of every leaf, over which he may insert whatever he needs; and Jesus promises that he shall have it.

It matters not *what* the want may be;—whether supplies for the soul or the body, for time or eternity—whether for self or friend, help in life or support in death—whether for work or suffering, for office or for private spheres—the word is, "*whatsoever ye shall ask*, he will give it you."

It matters not *where* it may be;—in the sanctuary or in the closet—in concert with others, or in isolation and alone—at home or abroad—on land or on sea—on the house-top with Peter, or in the dungeon with Paul—in the field or on the highway—in the crowded thoroughfare or in secluded solitude—kneeling by the public altar, or prostrate in the chamber of sickness—*anywhere* the promise is the same: "Ye shall receive."

It matters not *when* it may be;—in the twilight, the daylight, or the darkness—morning, noon, or night—on feast-day or fast-day, Sunday or week-day—in childhood, in youth, in the vigor of manhood, in declining age, in the fulness of life, or in the faint hours of death—at *any time*, the word is the same to all who will lay hold of it: "Ye shall receive."

It matters not *how* it may be;—whether in elegant and fore-studied language, or in broken accents and unconnected words—whether by outward voice or inward ejaculation—whether from book, or memory, or in the forms as they come welling-up at the moment—prostrate or standing, with eyes open towards heaven, or eyes closed and face bowed down—by means of the voices and words of others, or with voice or words of our own—by amens to the prayers of the Church, or devout approaches framed by ourselves—*any way*, so that it be honestly done, and in the name of the Lord Jesus. "God looks not at the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they may be; nor at the logic of our prayers, how methodical they may be;

nor at the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they may be; but it is the sincerity of them he looks at."

The answer to our asking may not always come at once, or just in the form and degree that we ask. Indeed, it cannot always come in its completefulness until we have done with this world. The Christian's joy cannot be perfect here. We must wait for the final consummation, and another order of being, before we come to the summit of our salvation. But such is the nature of the promise, that no true prayer can ever go unanswered, and neither time nor eternity has any blessedness for which we are not at liberty to pray, or which the Father will not give to them that ask him.

> From every stormy wind that blows,
> From every swelling tide of woes,
> There is a calm, a sure retreat,—
> 'Tis found beneath the Mercy-seat.

II. *The Saviour here directs us to rest entirely upon his Name in all our prayers.* "At that day ye shall ask in my name."

I said there is no limitation to the Saviour's promise; there is, however, a condition annexed—a specification to be observed for the full efficacy of our prayers. But it is a specification of particular comfort. What is man that God should be mindful of him? What is frail dust and ashes, that the infinite and eternal King of the universe should give audience to its cries? How can sinful mortals presume to ask favors of the great Al-

mighty, whose laws they have violated, and whose mercies they have abused? It looks like absurdity and impertinence to think of such a thing. Poor human nature may well shrink and tremble before such an adventure. But Jesus offers His Name on which to rest. He agrees to become our indorser for everything.

To use another's name without his consent, is forgery, and a crime of great heinousness. But Christ gives us permission to use his name, and commands us to use it as often and as much as we have need. An insolvent debtor goes to the bank, and draws check after check upon it; but it avails nothing. But when the officer sees those checks signed by the name of his rich neighbor, there is no more trouble, and the drafts are cashed. So with us. We are all insolvent debtors. We owe already beyond all possibility of ever meeting our indebtedness. We can command nothing whatever in our own name. But Jesus is rich. Whatsoever the Father hath is his. The bank itself is his. All its officers are his servants, and all its treasures are his property. And to our worthless paper he puts his own name, and engages to stand security for all we ask. Though there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can expect to have our prayers heard, his name is given. He has given it Himself. He has given it to any poor bankrupt who is willing to use it. And he promises that it shall be sufficient.

To ask in the name of Christ, is to ask as a

believer in Christ—as one whose whole hope is grounded on Christ—as one who is convinced and satisfied of the Divine character and worth of Christ, and throws himself on that alone.

Up to this time there had been no praying in Christ's Name. The reason was, that, until then, no one had sufficient comprehension of him so to pray. The success of all holy prayers of former dispensations, as all God's gracious gifts to men, rested also upon the merit and mediation of Christ; but everything was veiled in types and mystery, until Christ himself came, removed the veil, exhibited the reality, and pronounced to men the privileges they have in him. But now that the time of shadows is past, and our gracious Lord has appeared, and the Spirit of light and truth has come, a new and living way has been opened to the Father; and men need no longer ask through earthly priests and mediators, but go directly, and without hindrance or fear, in the name of Jesus to the throne itself.

III. *Still further, the blessed Saviour here refers to a heavenly intercession of his own in our behalf.* "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you."

The Saviour did not need to say it. It was to be inferred from his whole character, mission, work, and devotion to the interests of those whom he came to redeem. He needed not to say it to *them;* for they had often heard him pray the Father for them, and knew enough to assure them that

he would never forget them, and never cease to bear them upon the arms of his love and intercession. He had also said before: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever;" chap. 14:16; and immediately began a great intercessorial prayer for his people, which still resounds both in heaven and on earth. His "I say not," is therefore equivalent to the strongest "I do say;" and was so understood by the apostles, who afterwards wrote of him as "even at the right hand of God," where he "also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8:34.

As to the exact form and nature of Christ's intercessions for his people we are not informed. He is said to be our "Advocate with the Father." He here speaks of it as prayer to the Father. But the whole subject of the praying of the Son of God is overhung with mystery. We know that he was given to prayer whilst on earth; that he prayed for his murderers on the cross; and that he died praying. But however poorly we may conceive of it, it is still a part of his gracious work; and his intercessions are even now going on in heaven. Like Moses praying for Israel during the battle with Amalek, so our Saviour's hands are lifted up before the throne in behalf of his people in their battle with the trials and adversities of this world.

Ancient story tells of an Athenian on trial for his life, and about to be condemned to execution for his crimes. He had a patriot brother, who

had imperilled his life, and suffered mutilation of body, in a famous battle which had resulted in great glory to the state. Coming into court at the critical moment, he stepped forward, and silently held up his shattered arm in the presence of the judges. They looked, and hesitated, and were moved at the remembrance of his great services and sufferings for the public good. And so powerful was the appeal, that for his sake, they let the delinquent brother go free. Something after this sort we may conceive of our Saviour's intercessions in heaven. Even the best of us are continually coming short, and in ever fresh danger of condemnation and death. But there stands our mutilated and meritorious brother, in open court, holding up the hands that felt the nails, ever pleading in our behalf, and ever drawing down upon us the compassionate mercy of offended sovereignty!

> Five bleeding wounds he bears,
> Received on Calvary;
> They pour effectual prayers,—
> They strongly speak for me!
> Forgive him, O forgive! they cry,
> Nor let that ransomed sinner die!

IV. *Yet again, the Saviour here assures us that the Father himself loves us.* "The Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

It would seem to be a small matter in the great universe, what we poor mortals think of Jesus. But nothing is a trifle before God. The smallest

and most neglected things often have the deepest connections, and the sublimest results may hang upon what men are prone to think of no account. A man's fortune, or his salvation, may turn upon a single point, and an idle word, a hidden feeling, a breath of air, may decide it. Not only does our own eternal life depend on what we think and feel about Christ; but never a soul on earth begins to realize who Christ is, or to be drawn toward him in loving emotion and obedient faith, but it starts a corresponding interest in heaven, alters its relations to the whole government of the Almighty, and awakens tender and loving regard in the very heart of God himself. "Thus saith the Lord: . . To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Is. 66 : 1, 2.

Very precious, also, is this love of the Father. It is an active and efficient love. It is that love that begot a Saviour for us. It is that love that sent him into the world, and sustained him in his work, and presented him to our acceptance, and enabled us to receive him, and to believe in him. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And judging by what it has done for us in the past, while in our guilt and alienation; what may we not count on from it, now that we have learned to know and love our blessed Redeemer! "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. 5 : 8–10.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Rom. 8 : 32.

The Father's love is also an abiding love. Nothing can turn or interrupt it, so long as we love Jesus, and believe in him. What saith he? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." Is. 49 : 15, 16. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Is. 41 : 10. Hence, saith the apostle: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, *nor any other creature*, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8 : 38, 39.

A precious treasure is that which is thus opened to us by the loving Saviour in the Father's love. The world may be full of cold hearts and averted looks; but what matters that, if God loves us? We can afford to do without earthly friends, if we have the Almighty to care for us. With the love of the Father upon us, no man can keep us from going straight to that Father, or dig up the foundations of our joy. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8 : 31.

Still, it must not be overlooked, that this love

of the Father depends upon our love to Jesus, and our faith that he came out from God. There is no blessedness for man, in which Jesus is left out. He is the way to the Father, and we can hope for nothing from the Father but through him. We must love him, and rest on him as the eternal Son of God, and only then it is that the treasures of the Father's love are ours. His own words are plain: "*He that loveth me* shall be loved of my Father. . . If a man *love me*, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him. . . The Father himself loveth you *because ye have loved me*, and have believed that I came out from God." "Do ye now believe?" is the question on which everything depends. The Father's peculiar love goes out only upon his true children; and only *they* obtain power to become the sons of God who receive Jesus, and believe on his name. There is no Father's saving love, where there is no living union with the Son.

V. *Finally, the Saviour here forewarns us that this world is adverse to Christians, but that we need not be disheartened on that account.* "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own. . . In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Infirm and oft wavering faith is one of the sources of trial and adversity to Christians to which reference here is made. This was realized in the case of the twelve, and it is the same with

all saints. It is as yet an unseen world to which Christians belong, and with reference to which they think and act. All the things of our faith are veiled. "Now we see through a glass darkly." We know only in part. Often, what God does now we know not. We have to take things on trust, and endure as seeing Him who is invisible. This is hard for flesh and blood. Doubts will sometimes come. They came to these disciples, and they come to us all. And from this source we often are troubled, turned from the Saviour, driven from our proper fidelity to him, and brought to bitter experiences. Thomas seemed at one time to lose his faith altogether. Peter was suddenly surprised, and even denied that he ever knew his Lord. And the whole of them were disturbed, dismayed, and scattered when their Master was seized and crucified. Like things are continually repeating themselves in the experience of the Church. The Saviour complains of this, and tells us there is really no necessity for it. What he has said, is quite enough to keep us in perfect peace; but our faith is so weak, our understanding so imperfect, our whole thinking so earthly, that we do not half take it in.

But it is chiefly from without that Christians encounter the greatest adversities. "If ye were of the world," saith the Saviour, "the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This world has never been the friend of Christians. It lieth in the

wicked one, and all its children are imbued with his spirit, and act his malignant will. This world crucified Christ, and put to death his apostles, and stained the whole track of history with the blood of his confessors. It does not like our God, nor the bans and condemnation which he lays upon its wickednesses and falsities. Its Gospel is not that in which we hope. Its philosophy and wisdom do not come from above, but are of the earth, earthy. And all its maxims, fashions, and spirit are opposed to the truth as it is in Jesus. The result is, that every true Christian is a stranger and foreigner in it, the object of its contempt, and unable to be at peace with it. He cannot but condemn its evil ways, and it cannot brook his censures, and is quick and fierce to resent his attempts to convince it of its sins and follies. And as the unsanctified and the ungodly are always in the minority, the result is that the experiences of the Saviour are ever reproduced in all his faithful followers. Their life is one continued struggle, with temptation, with sin, with falsehood, with malignant passion, and with all sorts of afflictive antagonisms; so that it must ever be said: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. 15:19.

But, with all this "fight of afflictions" on our hands, we still have no occasion to be disheartened. The Saviour bids us "be of good cheer;" nay, to "rejoice and be exceeding glad," even when men revile us, and persecute us, and say all manner of evil against us falsely on account of our devotion

to him. We are not to expect to fare better than he fared, or than the holy prophets before him. There is also a luxury in suffering for right and truth, and a treasure of peace in the possession of a good conscience, which far outweigh all the shortlived pleasures of sin and worldliness. And even the sufferings of this present time, however sharp and heavy, are all connected with a refining process, and shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Our blessed Lord lost nothing by the ill-treatment which he received from the world. Though it persecuted, condemned, stripped, and crucified him, and numbered him among blasphemers and malefactors, he now sits at the right hand of eternal Majesty, King of heaven and earth. And when we consider what contradiction of sinners he endured, and yet triumphed so gloriously with it all, we certainly have no reason to be weary and faint in our minds under the light afflictions which fall to us.

Besides, he has overcome the world. He is its conqueror and rightful Lord. The great battle has been fought, and he has won it. There is no longer anything adverse in the world, except by his sufferance and permission. He is its victorious Master, and nothing will he allow which can work any real harm to those whom he is conducting through it to immortal thrones. No tribulation can be any severer for us than he is willing it shall be, for our own good and gain. It is only "for a moment"—for this present—for the short period

of earthly life. It will soon come to a perpetual end. That victory of his will ere long go into full effect, and sweep out the wicked and their works, and bring in an era of joy and honor for his saints, in which they shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Have we not reason, then, to "be of good cheer?" What if things are for the time perplexing, adverse, dark; with a throne of grace accessible, and the Name of Jesus to rest on for our credit before God, and the Saviour himself ever praying for us in heaven, and the great love of the Father embracing us as his own dear children, and the example, and victory, and promises of our dear Lord in view, what occasion is there for disheartenment and dismay? Timid, shrinking, sorrowing soul, why art thou so disquieted and cast down?

Since thy Father's arms sustain thee,
Peaceful be.
When a chastening hand restrains thee,
It is He.
Know his love in full completeness
Fills the measure of thy weakness;
If it wound thy spirit sore,
Trust him more.

To his own the Saviour giveth
Daily strength;
To each troubled soul that liveth
Peace at length.
Weakest lambs have largest share
Of this tender Shepherd's care.
Ask him not, then, *when* or *how*,
Only bow.

ASCENSION DAY.

Mark 16 : 14–20. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

WITHOUT controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Tim. 3 : 16. It is the last item in this catalogue of godly wonders that comes before us to-day. Forty days since the resurrection had passed, and the blessed Saviour was visibly present with his disciples for the last time. Henceforward, for many weary ages, he was to be seen no more upon earth. Having accomplished the object of his first coming, he was now about to resume the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. The place selected for this farewell

to earth and return to heaven, was close by where he had been accustomed to lodge, and where he had, shortly before, gone through the dreadful trial of accepting the cup to be drunk for the sins of the world. Having gone down to the base of that Mount, and endured the pressure of Gethsemane, he could now ascend its summit and take the crown of peace. The way of patient obedience, whatever may be its sorrows for the time, is the way to glory. The garden of Christian suffering is ever hard by the mount of triumphant ascension.

Nor can it be a matter of indifference to the pious, to know in what manner the blessed Saviour took final leave of his earthly Church. If we really love him, it cannot but interest us to understand how he conducted himself, how he looked, and what were the last things he said and did. Upon these points the Scriptures are not silent; and the whole account is quite in keeping with what we would naturally expect. Four things are particularly noticeable in the Gospel which the Church this day places before us. We here observe chidings, commands, promises, and the departure itself. To these, then, let us look, as becometh those who really believe on his name!

I. *Our departing Saviour's chidings.*—"He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." It sounds some-

what harsh, to hear that the gentle Jesus mingled rebukes with his parting words. Shallow sentiment might question the existence of real affection where any but the smoothest utterances could find place at such a time. But it was love itself that gave birth to these upbraidings. It was not that Jesus took pleasure in reproaching his disciples, or that he did not wish them every comfort and peace of mind; but it was just because their highest welfare was the chief desire of his heart, that he thus admonished them. There is nothing so subtle or so damaging to the peace of souls as the workings of unbelief. Faith is the great saving grace; and where that is wanting, there is misery, darkness, and death. Unbelief is of the devil. An unsophisticated child never disbelieves. And to be unbelieving toward God is the root of all discomfort and condemnation. It inheres in the very nature of things, that, "he that believeth not shall be damned." And as Jesus came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved, the object of his mission of love required that he should direct all his endeavors against unbelief. Hence we find him ever assiduously employed to have his disciples believe, and to have them accept and rest in him as their true Saviour, sent of God for their everlasting redemption. But, somehow or other, there is a dulness and deadness about the natural heart, which render it a very barren soil, even under the most gracious culture. With all the light and forewarning which these disciples had

received, they were completely confounded when the Master died; and after he had risen again, and appeared unto some of them, they were not willing even to believe each other's testimony on the subject. And it was just because he loved them, and wished to have them take in and possess the true joys of faith, that he upbraided them with their unbelief. The women had told them that he had risen, and that they had seen him; but they would not believe it. The message of the angel was carried to them, that he had risen; but still they would not believe it. The predictions of the Old Testament, and the foretellings of Christ himself, had plainly made known to them that he was to rise again; but with all they believed it not. And as one and another of them had met and seen the resurrected Lord, and told it to the rest, yet certain of them still doubted, and would not agree to believe it until they should have the thing demonstrated to their own senses in ways as cruel as they were unreasonable. Such unbelief and hardness of heart deserved and required chiding. It was a great wrong to the truth, and it was most perilous to those who indulged it. It made them unhappy, and it fearfully endangered their everlasting peace. Every interest of their own, and of those who were afterward to believe through their word, was put into terrible jeopardy by the indulgence of such stubborn skepticism. And as the Saviour loved them, and loved the souls of men in general, he referred to it in his last interview, expressed again his dissatisfac-

tion, and gave to them, and through them to all men, a last solemn warning against "an evil heart of unbelief."

And that valedictory admonition of our ascending Lord, is repeated to us again this day. If we have hesitated to credit his word, and doubted with reference to his Gospel, and hardened our hearts toward the blessed truths and movements of his grace, this festival of the Ascension comes to us with the Saviour's word of displeasure upon it, and of his last solemn warning, to "be not faithless, but believing."

Nor can we plead that no such evil temper and hardness have in any way characterized us hitherto. We may not have doubted that Jesus rose from the dead, but there are many other ways in which unbelief and hardheartedness manifest themselves. Have we so believed the resurrection of Christ as to take all its momentous implications home to our souls, and to have them living in our lives? Have we so believed it, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also walk in newness of life? For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Rom. 6:4–6. Admitting that Christ is risen, have we then so risen with him as to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God?

Col. 3; 1, 2. Conceding it as true that there is a blessed resurrection life for the virtuous and the good, have we really set ourselves to attain to that resurrection of the just? Yielding that Jesus is declared the Son of God with power, have we embraced him with all our heart, and clung to him as the only Saviour of our souls, and given ourselves to obey him in all things as the Captain of our salvation? Alas, alas, for our unbelief and hardness of heart! How have we grieved and dissatisfied our loving Lord, and sinned against our own comfort and peace by our infidelities! And on this high festival of his glorious ascension, he again upbraids us with our delinquencies, and calls upon us to repent us of the evil, and to "be not faithless but believing." The apostles took his parting rebuke to heart. They saw and felt how unreasonable they had been, how faulty had been their conduct, and how just and good it was that Jesus should thus rebuke and correct them. Thenceforward they showed a very different spirit, and set themselves to cherish a more lively faith, and turned away their eyes from their carnal hopes to seek all their blessedness in heaven. And what Ascension Day was to them, it may be, and it ought to be, to us, rebuking and correcting our unbelief and hardness of heart, in not more practically believing what has been told us of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

II. *Our departing Saviour's commands.*—"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and

preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Here is another grand testimony and manifestation of our great Redeemer's love. It is assumed that there is a heaven, and that there is a hell; but the desire of Jesus is that all men should escape the horrors of the one, and secure the blessedness of the other. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9. But there is only one way in which men can be saved. John the Baptist gave out the grand law of the case when he said: "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36. The Saviour himself here reannounces the same, and has made it firm and unalterable forever.

But it is impossible for men to believe on the Son, or to turn themselves heartily to him as their hope, without first having had him preached unto them. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10:14–17. Hence the command: "Go ye unto all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." This is now the grand commission of all Christ's disciples. The Gospel calls men, not only to be saved themselves, but to be agents and messengers in carrying the same salvation to others. Having ourselves come to the knowledge of the truth, and

to faith in Christ Jesus, our next business is to be heralds of that same saving truth to all within our reach. The preaching of the Gospel is a Divine work. It is an ordinance of our religion, as necessary as it is plainly enjoined. The requirement of Christ and the salvation of men unite in demanding it. And it is a work and office which devolves, in some sense, upon every man, woman, and child belonging to the household of faith. No Christian is exempt from its binding obligation, and no Christian is excluded from the high privilege and honor of taking part in it, according to his sphere and measure. There is, indeed, a line of discrimination to be observed between Christians in general, and those who are the chosen and appointed ministers of the Church; but the election of some to officiate more directly for the rest, assumes that there is a common office of this sort inhering in the whole body, and in all its members in common. That office, it is the business of every individual to exercise, if not in his own person, yet in and through others, by his vote, concurrence, and aid. And one of the great lessons of Ascension Day is, to inform and remind us of the fact, that such obligations are upon us, and that the command and will of our ascended Saviour have appointed us to the sublime mission of carrying and publishing his Gospel to every creature. Nor has that glorious farewell of his become to us what it was meant to be, so long as we remain untouched and indifferent with reference to the wants of the ignorant and godless

millions of our fellow-beings, who are perishing for lack of a preached Gospel and the knowledge of the truth, which the Church alone has, and is commanded to give to all men.

But the mere preaching and hearing of the truth is not all. Something more is necessary in order to full profit in Divine grace. As Christ commands the preaching of the Gospel to every one, so he also, at the same time, appoints and ordains the holy sacrament of Baptism to be received by every one, as a test of his obedience to the truth, and as a further means of imparting his Holy Spirit. Where this sacrament is neglected or despised, there the Gospel is preached to very little effect. Faith without obedience is nothing, and salvation is promised only to him "that believeth *and is baptized.*" It may seem to be a very small thing—a mere insignificant ceremony; but in whatever way men look upon it, Jesus appointed it, and has connected with it all the sublime benefits of his mediation. His last words were: "He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved," and there is no power on earth to alter what he has said.

We must remember, also, that saving faith is not a product of our reason and will. "It is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. It is a thing wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. And the instrument of the Holy Ghost is the word and sacraments. We may receive the Holy Ghost and the gift of faith in part, through the preached word; but along with that word, and as a further means of grace,

God has appointed Baptism as well as preaching; and the promise of salvation rests on one as upon the other. Hence it is written: "Except a man be *born of water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5. And again: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by *the washing of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. 3:5. And again, that "the ark wherein eight souls were saved by water," was a "like figure whereunto *Baptism doth also now save us*," which is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." 1 Pet. 3:20, 21. Simple as it may seem, there is therefore a precious spiritual treasure in Baptism—a treasure which we may fail to enjoy in consequence of our unbelief, but nevertheless a treasure which has most important connection with our salvation, and without which we do suffer great mutilation in the plan of God for ministering to us his saving grace. Hence the farewell charge of the loving Jesus is, that we carry this sacrament wheresoever we carry the Gospel itself; and that, equally with our preaching of his truth to every creature, it is our duty to offer Baptism to every creature, and to demand of all men obedience to the one, as we require faith in the other, as the Divine conditions on which alone we are authorized to promise salvation to them that hear us. Some may regard this as a hard saying; but such is our commission, solemnly re-uttered to us again this day in the festival of the

glorious ascension of our risen Lord. The language is plain; the nature of the requirement is obvious; and it is not for us to undertake to qualify or change the Master's words to suit the whims, fancies, or aberrations of poor wayward flesh and blood. If any are willing to risk their salvation upon any other theory, we cannot help it. It is not for us to compel them contrary to their convictions. But if they make shipwreck upon this point, our skirts are clear, and they will have themselves to blame. As for our part, let us be stirred up to more earnest testimony to the truth, knowing that it is our Lord's command to hold forth his Gospel and his sacraments to every creature as the appointed instruments of salvation, and that his final word was: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

III. *Our departing Saviour's promises.* — "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." These are grand and startling announcements. Skepticism has often pointed to them, and challenged Christians to attest their faith accordingly. Scoffers would have it appear that our religion is a forgery, tried by these its Author's promises. But so sweeping a conclusion is at once and adequately stayed, if it can at all be

shown that these signs did accompany the ministrations of those to whom the words were given. Whether such miracles occur now or not, if they ever were actually wrought by Christians, then the promise has been fulfilled, and the taunt of infidelity falls to the ground.

Turning back, then, to those trying times when Christianity went forth in a few humble fishermen and tent-makers, to grapple with the hoary systems which then held empire over the world, we are also abundantly certified, that in no instance did these assurances fail. Going forth as they were commanded, the great power of God went with them, "bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Heb. 2:4.

Were they to be able to cast out demons? We have only to look into apostolic history to see Paul at Philippi confronting a "certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying." And he "said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour," to such vexation and chagrin of her masters, that they raised the mob against the holy men who had shown such power. Acts 16:16–24. In Ephesus, also, "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Acts 19·11.

12. And many demons of pride, covetousness, uncleanness, drunkenness, gluttony, ambition, and demons of lust, hatred, moroseness, and spirits of wickedness of innumerable sorts, did these same apostles expel by their preaching, turning men from their idols and corruptions to serve the living and true God; thus both literally and spiritually fulfilling the blessed promise of the Master, that, in his name, they should "cast out devils."

Were they to be able to speak in languages which they had never learned? We have only to turn to the records of the day of Pentecost, to find Peter and his fellow-disciples addressing crowds of people of all countries and languages under heaven, and astounding them with the amazing miracle, "that every man heard them speak in his own language." Acts 2: 5–11. Also at Cesarea, we find Peter preaching in the house of Cornelius, and "while he yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word; and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost; for they heard them speak with other tongues." Acts 10: 46.

Were they to be able to take up poisonous reptiles unharmed? We have only to follow Paul in his shipwreck at Melita, where, whilst engaged in laying sticks upon a fire to warm himself, a viper struck and fastened its fangs upon his hand. But when all beholders expected that he would certainly drop dead, he shook the venomous thing

into the fire, and realized no harm whatever, so that the people were amazed, and proposed to sacrifice to him as a god. Acts 28 : 1–6.

Were they to be able to drink deadly draughts with impunity? Church history tells of a fatal potion prepared for the destruction of the Apostle John, which he drank, but was unhurt by the poisoned cup, which it was confidently counted would be his death.

Were they to be able to heal the sick and the suffering? Peter and John healed the lame man at the temple's gate, though he had been a cripple from his birth. Acts 3 : 1–9. At Lydda, Peter "found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy; and Peter said unto him: Eneas, Jesus Christ make thee whole; arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord." Acts 9 : 33–35. Paul, at Lystra, found "a certain man impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never walked;" and "steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked;" so that "the people lifted up their voices, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." Acts 14 : 8–11. And time would fail to tell the works of healing wonder which the disciples wrought in the name of Jesus, by prayer and the laying on of hands, in which the Master fulfilled

his promise: "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." "They went forth, and preached the word everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

Nor was the promise or the fulfilment of it confined to them alone. It was not made to apostles simply, but "them that believe," and hence to Christians in general. Accordingly, we find this miraculous power working in and by the Church for a hundred years after the Saviour's ascension. In all the early Christian annals we read of its presence and doings. Nor has there ever been a period in the history of the Church, nor can there be, in which the blessed promise does not apply, or remain without fulfilment. It is coextensive with the commission itself. It has never been recalled or modified to this day. It is still outstanding, firm, and good; and always must hold good, as long as the Gospel is preached, and men are found to believe it. That we do not behold the same now as in the early ages, is no fault of the Saviour or of the certainty of the promise. Still, as the truth is preached and believed, devils are cast out, and men are made to speak with other tongues, and poisonous and deadly things are deprived of their hurtful power, the sick and infirm are healed, and the dead are made alive. But also in a more literal sense, had men now the faith and zeal of apostles and early Christians, they would be able to wield like powers, and have their work and commission attested by corresponding signs.

God's arm is no shorter now than then, and he is no less at the command of true believing prayer than ever he has been. It is no use to be telling the Church that this presence of the Holy Ghost is no longer needed, and hence no longer to be looked for or attempted. God has never said so; and we ought not to despoil his glorious promises with our rationalism. We have the same Jesus and the same promises, in this respect, which the early Christians had. The lack is not to be sought in the absence of necessity, but in the weakness and the infirmity of our faith. There were places, when Christ was on earth, at which he did not many mighty works, because of the unbelief of the people. Want of faith will always restrain and grieve away the gracious power of God. And instead of reasoning these precious promises into a state of superannuation, let us rather conclude that the Church's living confidence in her Lord has declined. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than one jot or tittle of our Saviour's words fail. It is not that he is unwilling, or that we may no longer look for gifts of wonder to attend our prayers, but that we are too unbelieving, too earthly, and too little in the spirit of what we profess. Let us look for more, pray with more confidence, realize more thoroughly what our high calling is, and what an almighty Saviour we have, and as God is true, his promise will be verified now as well as in other ages.

IV. *The departure itself.*—"So then after the

Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." The description is brief, but enough is given to bring the scene vividly before us. There was no thunder, as on Sinai; no darkness, as at the crucifixion; no overpowering radiance, as at the transfiguration. There was only the gentle lifting up of the hands to bless. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them." By a placid motion, his feet ceased to touch the earth, and his body mysteriously conveyed itself slowly upward. With eager eyes the disciples looked as he rose higher and higher in the air, and strained their vision after him as the clouds received him out of their sight. And long after they had seen the last of him, they continued to gaze into the sky, till waiting angels addressed them, and delivered to them his promise to come again in like manner as they had seen him go.

Such was the ascension as viewed from below; but who shall describe it as viewed from above? How did the trumpets of heaven sound, and the shouts of the glorified go forth! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!" Lost to the view of earth, how triumphant was his entrance into heaven! With what sublime acclamations was he welcomed to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was! Eternity thrilled as he advanced to his place at the right hand of the Father; for so it is written, God hath gone up with a shout, the Lord with

the sound of a trumpet; sing praises unto God, sing praises!

Thus closed the visible connection of our Saviour with this world, till he shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. Far above all principality and power, he now sits enthroned, the Lord of glory, the King of the universe; for "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:9–11. He is therefore worthy of our confidence, our adoration, and our obedience. His promises he is able to fulfil. "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Heb. 9:28.

Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God.
Day by day we magnify Thee;
And we worship Thy Name ever,
World without end.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION.

John 15 : 26, 27; 16 : 1–4. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

IT is well for us that we do not always know beforehand what troubles are coming upon us. If we did always know, we should often be cast down with the prospect, and unfitted to enjoy the blessings of the time present. God, therefore, mercifully hides the future from us, knowing that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." He would have us confide in him for whatever may be before us, that trusting in him we may be neither over-anxious nor over-sanguine.

And yet it is sometimes important to have an idea of the changes to which we are exposed. Whilst we are not to be swallowed up with anxious care of what is to come, it is well to be thoroughly aware of the instability and uncertainty of all our earthly blessings, that when they are

taken away, we may not be overwhelmed by the loss of them. To be forewarned, is to be in a measure forearmed.

Hence the Saviour did not leave his disciples without telling them in advance something of the trials which they might expect in the work and mission to which he had appointed them. He was no deceiver. He did not falsify, or keep back from men the adversities which would go along with fidelity to him. He did not flatter men, or seek to influence them by imaginings which were never to be realized, or by painting Christian life as all sunshine and happiness. He told out from the beginning what each one might expect, and what sufferings they would have to undergo for his sake. And the object for which he did this was, that they might be assured of his foreknowledge when the troubles came, and so be enabled to bear them without being offended.

It was a great honor and a high office which the Saviour had committed to these disciples. They were to be his witnesses among men, and for this end they had been with him from the beginning. They were to be the heralds and ministers of the new economy, and princes of the sacred kingdom of grace. But their office was connected with trials as well as honors. There was to be suffering as well as exalted station. They would necessarily have to encounter what would offend their comfort and try their fidelity. They were to be expelled from the synagogues, because of their testimony for Christ; and the

time was to come that men would seek to destroy their lives, and think it God's service to kill them. And the Saviour was very particular to have them forewarned of this, and made fully acquainted with what they might expect. "All these things," said he, "they will do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."

I. A very sad but important truth is thus brought to our contemplation. The world is no friend to genuine piety. The history of the saints has always been a history of trial, tears, and blood. Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. The unsanctified world could not abide Christ himself, and neither will it abide his faithful witnesses. There is in the natural heart a degree of malignity and rancor which renders it forever impossible for it to be on good terms with the Gospel, or with those who confess, preach, and live it, in its purity. Bunyan did not overstate the case when he represented Christian and Faithful as the subjects of adverse criticism, ridicule, censoriousness, blame, and bloody assault, from the people of Vanity Fair. "The wicked seeth the righteous, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth." "He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." And if the world is at any time at peace with the Church, it is because the Church itself has departed from its proper

office of testifying for her Lord. A witness for Jesus is, at the same time, a witness against the world, its corruptions, its vanities, its unbelief, and all its deceitful ways, however gilded by specious names or pious pretences. This the unsanctified heart cannot bear, and will not quietly abide, without spiteful resentment. The nominal Christian and the formalist, whose faith is a dead letter, and who never disturb the easy-going consciences of men, escape opposition and hatred. The world loves them, and takes up for them, and greatly favors them; but it is because they are of the world, and are really *its* priests, not Christ's witnesses. Let a man be a Christian in deed as well as in name, let him condemn the iniquities of men as Christ condemned them, and insist without faltering on the literal demands of the word of God; and as certainly as he lives, the reproaches that fell upon the Master will come upon him too. Let any Christian or Faithful appear in Vanity Fair, and act and speak his principles and hopes as the Bible requires; let him come in contact with the brainless triflers over its toys and vanities; let him show the busy, genteel, but graceless pursuers of riches, pleasures, honors, and the empty parade of this life, how they are debauching and criminating themselves for everlasting perdition; and as surely as the grace and Spirit of Christ are in him, he will be put down as a fanatic and a fool, if not made to suffer as an offender. It was so in the earlier ages, and it must be so as long as depravity has freedom to act. If

people suppose that the offence of the cross has ceased, or ever will cease in this present order of things, they take issue with the words of Christ, and wofully deceive themselves. Satan is the Lord of Vanity Fair, and the god of this world; and his murderous spirit is in all the children of this world, needing only the application of the test to show it. Attack it with the sword of truth, or smite it with the threatenings Christ has pronounced upon it, and it stiffens itself for battle, and sets every inventive power to work to disarm you if it can, and to put you out of the way. While people serve the devil, the world has nothing to say, provided it be done genteelly. And should it even be done in the garb and ceremonies of a moderate religiousness, especially in humanitarian goodnesses, all is right. But let there be a breaking up of this dead earthiness, and formalism, and self-glorification, and an honest going to work for Christ as his living witnesses, and there is disapproving uneasiness, mockery, sneers, and malignity. It is a sad picture, but it is true, and just what the Saviour said from the beginning.

The great reason why Christians of our day have such a good and easy time of it is, because they are not Christians after the style of the apostles—not Christians brought clean out from the world, and made to know and show the power of their profession. Of course the world will have no objection to a man's being a member of the Church, if he still continues open to all its solicitations, and may be depended on to carry on its

works, fight its battles, work its mines, help its politics, enrich its literature, add to its glory, increase its power, and build up its selfish interests. What need the world care for the little matter of going occasionally to the communion-table, or sitting under an ingenious preacher on Sundays, or now and then contributing a few hundred dollars to build a church, or parting with a little spare change on collection days; if the same persons will take stock in theatres, and favor operas, and balls, and worldly carousings, and in general co-operate with the world on its own level, and for its own ends! What need the devil concern himself to harass and persecute people who are as much at ease in the play-house and beer-house as in the place of devotion, to whom worldly fashions are as interesting as the Gospel, and who are quite at peace with earthly vanity, and bestow thousands on mere folly and selfishness, to tens for the cause of piety and religion! It is not that the natural heart is better, but that the piety of men is worse. The world has not changed, but the Church has compromised itself; forgetting "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4), and the friendship of God enmity with the world.

Some may take this as a very disheartening state of things, and doubt the use of trying to be Christians. But it is a picture which Christ himself has drawn, and which has been amply verified in the history of his people. Nay, the very resentment which some of you may be feeling in

your hearts as I make these statements, is proof that the Saviour was not mistaken in what he said. It is just this feeling which he knew to be in man, and which he knew would be stirred up wherever the real truth is uttered. Nor need any one require better evidence that his religion is not yet of the right sort, than to find his heart becoming angry and impatient at the cross and self-denial which the Gospel demands of men.

II. But, after all, it is not so hard and painful a thing to be a Christian, if only we will be Christians in deed and in truth. It is just because people have so little religion that it goes so hard with them to meet its requirements. Though the earnest devotion of the disciples was to subject them to maltreatment and persecution, and the time was to come when people would think it God's service to kill them, there were ample counterbalances to all their sorrows. And as the blessed Saviour foretold the sad part, he did not withhold from them the glad part. Along with the unavoidable pain, there was given a still mightier consolation. With his predictions of their sufferings was given his guarantee of support in them, and glorious triumph over them. He had given them his word that he would not leave them comfortless. His assurance was that he would pray the Father, who would give them another Comforter, that he might abide with them forever. Chap. 14 : 17, 18.

As mere men, without supernatural aid, the

apostles would have had a sorry time of it, and could have made but little progress against their own doubts and weaknesses, much less the gainsaying world. They needed to be armed, sustained, and guided by the presence of a superhuman intelligence and power. And that needed Helper was promised them in the Holy Ghost. He was to be in them as an intelligent, indwelling, and almighty Spirit, establishing, confirming, emboldening, instructing, and comforting them, as necessity might require, overcoming their doubts, strengthening their hands, prompting their utterances and acts, speaking through their lips, and witnessing in and by them with an energy whose divinity none might dispute.

We know how all this was fulfilled unto these disciples. We know what happened on the day of Pentecost, when "they were all with one accord, in one place." That Spirit came, as cloven flame, and alighted upon them, and sunk into their inmost nature, transforming their feebleness into power, their darkness into light, and their words into arrows of truth, which penetrated into the hearts of men as no words ever did before. The same works which the Saviour did, they now did also; and where he left off, they in his name took the matter up, and went forward with a victorious power, which men could not help but see to be from God. Opposition, adversity, suffering, stripes, imprisonments, outward perils of life, and all threatenings of death, instantly lost their influence. Their misgivings disappeared. Their con-

fidence was perfected. Their fear of man departed. Their heroism became godlike. And forward, ever forward, they went, glorying in tribulation; troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not without resources; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, but ever pulsating with his life; always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, yet triumphing, and giving glory to God; till martyrdom crowned them, and they entered with rejoicing into their rest. Though going about under the ban of public authority, and bound in spirit, not knowing the things that should befall them, save that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited them; none of these things moved them, neither counted they their lives dear unto them, in order that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:22–24. Triumphantly they met the brandished steel, the lion's fury, crucifixion's ignominy, and the fire's devouring thunder, sure that their witness was true, and their record in heaven, and a crown of immortal glory reserved for them, when this world's course was run;—and all as the fruit of that Divine power which was sent upon them through the ascension and intercession of their departed Lord and Redeemer.

And that same Holy Ghost, in the same offices, and after the same manner, if not exactly or in every instance to the same degree, is still the

legacy of Jesus to his people, and abides with and in them, as the Spirit of truth and power, to transform, comfort, enlighten, direct, strengthen, and embolden them, and to make them joyous and triumphant amid whatever outward trials they may be placed, or whatever burdens of earthly sorrow they may be called to bear.

When Alexander set out upon his brilliant campaign against the Persians, he disposed of his home possessions, giving them all to his friends; to one a farm, to another a villa, to another the revenue of a borough, until everything was entirely disposed of. And when he had thus divested himself of all he possessed, Perdicas said to him, "Alas! but you have nothing left for yourself!" "*My portion*," replied the general, "*is Hope*." And with nothing but *Hope*, he conquered. So with the Christian. Renouncing the world and all its delusive entanglements, he goes forth to the field seemingly poor, helpless, and alone; but he still retains an Alexander's portion—he still has HOPE—a hope which maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him. Rom. 5 : 5. Let his straits and conflicts be what they may, upheld and helped by an inward and unfailing power, he goes steadily onward, like the sun, which stops not, neither turns aside, for the clouds, or for his having to tread the trackless way alone.

Hope, with uplifted foot, set free from earth,
Pants for the place of her ethereal birth,

> On steady wings sails through the immense abyss,
> Plucks amaranthine joys from bowers of bliss,
> And crowns the soul, while yet a mourner here,
> With wreaths like those triumphant spirits wear.

Oh, happy they, and safe, and mighty, and the only true conquerors of the world, who are Christians indeed, and have from their hearts embraced Christ! Jehovah himself is with them as their strength, and the eternal Paraclete is their Comforter. God grant that we all may be among the number!

III. But in order to this there is one important requisite. This promise is only to them who consent, without reserve or equivocation, to bear witness for Christ. Heart, hand, lips, and life must be earnestly and honestly given to this work. We must boldly confess and consistently live Christ's truth, and cling to it at all costs, and do all that is in our power for him and for his cause. This is our calling as Christians. If any one is a real member of Christ, he is a witness for Christ, and a worker for the cause of Christ. Indeed, this is the great and paramount function of the Church, and of every member of it. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the necessary inquiry of every one who has learned to see and know Jesus as the Christ; and the answer is substantially now as in Paul's day: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto

thee." Acts 26 : 16. Practical Christianity has but two grand articles, in which everything is summed up. The first is, to receive and know Christ yourself; and the second is, to testify of him to others.

People often draw very foolish distinctions between the ministry and the laity, and between missionaries and common Christians. The truth is, that every Christian is something of a minister; and every one is something of a missionary, if a Christian at all. He who has tasted of the love of God, by the very necessities of the case must be a witness for Jesus. The spheres of individuals may differ, and the theatre of one may be wider and more imposing than that of another; but the work of each is in substance the same. All saints have but one business in this world, and that business is, witnessing for Jesus. They may have very diverse earthly trades, stations, and relations to society; but, in all of them, there is only this one appointment and charge of the Master,—to bear witness to him. The minister is nothing more than a witness, and the layman is nothing less than a witness. Because the one is statedly seen in the pulpit, with prepared messages, elaborated by his prayers and study from the Scriptures of truth, he is not to be regarded as doing anything else than simply performing in his sphere what is the duty of every Christian in such place as God may have given him. All saints are witnesses for Jesus; and he who has not yet come to realize that he has such a function to discharge, as well in his own particular circumstances as in

connection with the general body of his fellow-believers, has not yet learned to drink in the spirit and nature of the religion he professes, and does not yet know his work and office as a Christian. Public teaching is testifying; but not all testifying is necessarily public teaching. Living Christ in the common affairs and duties of life, is as much a bearing of witness for Christ, as proclaiming him from the pulpit. Filling our places in the world, and devoutly conforming things there to the Spirit of Christ, and exemplifying the Gospel in the humblest walks, is as really testifying for Jesus, as the going forth to plant the standard of the cross in heathen lands. Even if no more can be done than the giving of a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, and for the sake of Jesus, it is a witnessing for him. And whether our means or opportunities be large or small, be it in the pulpit or out of it, this is the one great and all-comprehending duty and commission of every true Christian, as it is of the Church as a whole,—to be a witness for Jesus. We must confess him with our lips, stand up for his rights, give ourselves to his service, live his precepts, help on his cause, and so use our gifts that they may not lie buried and unused, but made productive to the praise of our Redeemer's name. "Ye shall bear witness of me."

God strengthen us for every trial and every duty, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory forever. Amen.

WHITSUNDAY.

JOHN 14: 23–31. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

BY the general consent of the Church for many ages, this day has been set apart from all others for the devout commemoration of the marvellous fulfilment of one of the Saviour's most marvellous promises. What that promise was, is taught us in the Gospel appointed for the day. It relates to a manifestation of himself to his true disciples, such as he does not make to the world—a coming of the Father and the Son to them that love him—the advent of a new Agent, at least in new measure

and potency, to operate as the vicegerent of Jesus, and to be the teacher, comforter, and guide of all saints—the settlement in and upon them of a Divine power, which was to abide with them forever—the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Let us therefore inquire a little into the proper and comforting Christian doctrine concerning the Holy Ghost, looking to God to assist us in the attempt, and to bless us in the contemplation.

I. What is the Holy Ghost?

It is everywhere assumed that there is a Holy Ghost. Some may not have come to a knowledge of him; but he is, and he is coeternal with Godhead itself. The Scriptures everywhere speak of the Spirit of God—a potent *ruâch* or πνευμα—which is the all-pervading and all-animating principle of life in nature, and in the universal world of things. They speak of the Spirit of God as that eternal cause of life and motion which brooded over the face of chaos when the world was made (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13); as the power by which the hosts of heaven were created; and as that vitalizing Divine Spirit which inspired the prophets, rested on Jesus, and is the source of all virtue in Divine ordinances, and all comfort and attainment in Christian experience. The same is called, "the power of the Highest," Luke 1:35;—"the breath of God's mouth," Is. 33:6;—"the Spirit of truth," John 14:17;—"the Spirit of God," Gen. 1:2;—"the eternal Spirit," Heb. 9.14;—"the Holy Ghost," Acts 1:5, 8.

But we are not to conceive of the Holy Ghost as a mere quality or attribute of God, such as wisdom, goodness, omnipresence. The Scriptures speak of him as a personal subsistence, possessed of consciousness, affections, and independency of will and action. The Spirit is said to live, move, search, speak, prophesy, give gifts, and work miracles. He is also said to understand, to be pleased, vexed, provoked, grieved, sinned against, and the like; which can be spoken only of a person. He is also alluded to as something more than simple power or energy. It is written that "God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost *and with power*." True, where the Holy Ghost is there is power, because power is one of the inherent and inseparable possessions of the Holy Ghost; but the Holy Ghost, and the power of the Holy Ghost, are not one and the same. The Scriptures note them as two things. The one is a quality or attribute, and the other is a personal Being and agent. In the Baptismal formula, and in the apostolic Benediction, both of which have been given by Divine authority, the Holy Ghost is associated with the Father and the Son, as coequal in worshipful dignity, and as a distinct Person, the same as the Father and the Son.

It is plain, also, that the Holy Ghost is somehow identical with eternal Godhead. Paul says, "that Spirit is the Lord," or "the Lord is that Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:17, 18. Peter charges Ananias, that, in lying to the Holy Ghost, he had lied "unto God." Acts 5:3, 4. All the attributes, works, and honors

of God are also ascribed to the Holy Spirit, the same as to God the Father. Eternity, omniscience, almightiness, creation, preservation, resurrection, sanctification, all are attributed to the Holy Spirit, the same as to the Father and the Son; and Ezekiel is directed to pray to the Spirit: "Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!"

But although the Holy Ghost is God, he is, nevertheless, distinguished from the Father, and also from the Son. He comes from the Father, is sent by the Father, and hence cannot be the Father, as such. As sent by the Father, he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God, and searcheth the deep things of God, even all truth which God hath spoken. But if he is possessed of no personality distinct from the Father, we would then have the Father coming forth from himself, sent by himself, making intercession to himself, according to the will of himself, and searching the deep things of himself; which would be a style of writing not ascribable to any sane man, much less to inspired apostles, and the Divine Saviour.

By the Holy Ghost, therefore, we understand a Divine Person, coexistent with the Father and the Son, and proceeding from the Father and the Son. He is the Spirit of the Father, because he proceeds from the Father; and he is the Spirit of Christ, because he proceeds from both the Father and the Son, and is one in the eternal Three-One of adorable and unsearchable Godhead.

II. What is the Office of the Holy Ghost?

In general, we may say, that he is executor of the Divine will; not ministerially, as angels and apostles; but originally, as participating from all eternity in the nature, attributes, and glory of immutable and ineffable Godhead. In this sense he is the life and soul of all things, working in and through all the forces and laws of nature, providence, and grace.

In the more specific economy contemplated in the text, he is the particular author and agent of all those gifts and graces which enter into the application and experiences of salvation. Whatever is included in the enlightenment, conversion, sanctification, spiritual peace, and divine power embodied in the Church, is the immediate fruit of his agency. He is the Paraclete—advocate—comforter—teacher—sanctifier—helper—guide—of all the saints. If there is in any mind a holy thought, or in any heart a heavenly desire, or in any soul a feeling of joy and peace in God, or in any man a spiritual gift, it is all attributable directly to the presence and administration of the Holy Ghost, as promised by the Saviour, and as sent forth from the Father and the Son. Paul gives us to understand, that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost; that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal; that to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to an

other the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues; and that all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. 1 Cor. 12.

It is the particular office of the Holy Ghost to renew and sanctify the heart. Elsewhere the Saviour spoke of him, saying, "I will send the Comforter unto you; and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 14. Paul says that we are "saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost"—"chosen unto salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit" —"sanctified by the Spirit of God."

Jesus says: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5. Of those who have new hearts, and walk in God's statutes, and keep his judgments, Ezekiel says that they have this happy experience from the fact that God hath put his Spirit upon them. Ezek. 36:27. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," all of which are the marks of the new life of Christ in men, are given as peculiarly "the fruits of the Spirit." Gal. 5:22, 23. They can come from no other source. And all the grace that is in the hearts of Christians, and whatever is characteristic of them, is from the blessed ministrations of the Holy Ghost.

Hence, also, it is the office of the Spirit to give efficiency to all the means of grace, through which alone he ordinarily operates. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Zech. 4:6. It is the Spirit that indites the saving word, that calls and endows men to preach it, that works so mightily in the sacraments, that calls and interiorly organizes the Church, and that carries the grace of God into the hearts and experiences of men. A Paul may plant, and an Apollos water; but the increase is entirely from the Holy Ghost.

And in all the wants, temptations, and trials of God's people, it is this same Holy Spirit that sustains, establishes, and consoles them. He is *the Comforter*, whom the Father sends in Jesus' name, who teaches them all they know, brings to their remembrance what they need to have in mind, helpeth their infirmities, and witnesseth with their spirits that they are the children of God.

A vast and precious blessing was therefore embraced in this promised gift of the Spirit, the great outpouring of which we this day commemorate. In the Holy Ghost, and his gracious presence with the Church, we have the great power and renewing grace of God made availing to us. It is God himself imparted to us, to work in us the pleasure of his own will, the restoration of our fallen nature, and our eternal sanctification in Christ Jesus. It is the administration of regenerating and empowering mercy, set up on earth and in our hearts, to make us hopeful, holy, pure,

and obedient members of a living and heavenly organism, which has its being and life from the very throne of God. It is that without which even all that Christ has done for us would be without practical avail, but by means of which we become new creatures, children of God, and joint-heirs with our adorable Lord to a celestial and imperishable inheritance.

III. How does the Holy Ghost operate?

So far as contemplated in the text, the answer to this question is not difficult. But the subject is a deep and mysterious one, which cannot be traced in all its details, and upon which we dare not be too positive. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8.

As to the economy of grace, we are perhaps the safest in assuming, that the Holy Ghost never works salvation in men apart from the truth and sacraments. Jesus said of this Holy Spirit, "He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." It would seem, therefore, that, apart from such teaching, or some making of the truth of the Gospel manifest to the minds and understandings of men, the Holy Ghost would fail to be to them that Comforter and invigorating power which was promised. We do not suppose that the grace of

the Holy Spirit is necessarily tied to the mere letter of the word; but we know of no instances of his saving work except in connection with the word, and the illumination of the mind by means of it. Scintillations of Divine truth have at times been produced from incidents apparently casual and alien, and not immediately connected with the written word, by which persons have been led to salvation; but they have nevertheless been the same that are more fully and perfectly embodied in the scriptural records. And it is ever by teaching, and bringing the truth to remembrance, that the grace and power of the Holy Ghost are put forth, and that he becomes to us an agent of renewal. The Saviour himself prayed: "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth."

And even in the case of those more marvellous and striking powers with which the Holy Ghost has at times clothed men, there has always been an accompanying fulness, clearness, and vigor in the apprehension and belief of the truth, and such a living realization of it, that we would certainly err if we did not connect them together, and consider the one a condition of the other.

Neither does the Holy Ghost operate upon men by mechanical or irresistible impulses, superseding their will, and reducing them to mere machines; for in that case every virtuous thing in us would be so entirely God's, that no part of it could in any sense be reckoned as *ours*, and there would be no room for the numberless exhortations to repentance and well-doing with which the Scrip-

tures abound. Though we cannot trace and perfectly unfold all the mysterious workings of Deity upon the spirit of man, we know that they are *moral*, and that they only prepare, incite, and enable us for what the will of the Lord is. What is beyond that, must have the active concurrence of our own minds and hearts. With all the great and unspeakable things which grace does for us, the Scriptures always presuppose that people are still capable of resisting the Holy Ghost, grieving the Spirit, and even of quenching him. The Holy Spirit enlightens, moves, and *inclines* men, but he never *compels* them. He prompts and leads as many as are willing to be prompted and led, but he never forces them. Where there is stubborn resistance, wilful perverseness, and malicious obstinacy, his gracious influences are repelled, and no saving benefits are realized. Even with all the miraculous manifestations by which Paul was brought to a knowledge of the truth, the moral effect was not of such sort but that he might have been "disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Simon Magus also had miraculous experiences, but he does not appear to have given his heart to obey the truth. And in none of the means through which the Holy Spirit works, whether it be the word or sacraments, is there anything to advantage us, or to further us in salvation, where the heart is closed to the truth, or where there is no willing reception of it. It is by these instrumentalities that grace is brought to us, and light and help are offered to assist faith, and to bring us under the

transforming power of God, if we are willing; but it, after all, depends upon the honesty and zeal with which we avail ourselves of what is proposed, whether we are profited or not. One is often warned, moved, and decided in the way of life, by the same truths, and the same presentations of them, which do not at all profit another; not because the Holy Ghost is not equally present and potent for both, but because of the difference in the temper and will of the parties. To one, the whole machinery of the Gospel is a savor of death unto death, and to another it is a savor of life unto life; not because it is not precisely the same to both, but because the one throws himself open to it, yields, and obeys, and the other hesitates, objects, draws back, and rebels. Let there be a good and honest heart, which meekly receives the ingrafted word, and takes to the pure and gracious will of God, and there the Spirit is, to teach all things, and to bring all Christ's precious instructions into living remembrance, and to be a Comforter indeed. But where such a disposition is wanting, and people refuse to respond to the heavenly promptings, and the will is perverse and rebellious, there all the grace of God is received in vain.

IV. How may we profit by the Holy Ghost?

The answer to this also is contained in the text. Jesus says: "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

We must have a mind for the Gospel, and for these sacred things. We must be awake and alive to the claims and merits of the blessed Jesus. We must be willing to hear of him, to think of him, and to look to him as our true and ever-adorable Lord, who gave himself to death for us. Having no taste for what relates to him, no sympathy with his Spirit, no affection for his character and work, no willing interest in his history, mission, and proposals, of course we are in no condition to be profited by his grace. Of ourselves, indeed, we cannot be rightly affected towards Christ. But for this end the Gospel is given, and the Spirit is sent, and ever works in the Church, to beget in us a right and heavenly mind and taste. Nor will such a state of the affections fail us, if we are only willing and ready to give heed, and to take in the exalted mercy. The reason why so many people are not interested in Jesus, is the same that hinders them from profiting by the Holy Ghost. It does not suit them to give attention. Their hearts are on other things, and they are not willing to recall them, or to give themselves to the business of learning of the Saviour. And so they are unprofited by their gracious opportunities. They do not love Christ, and hence the Comforter never comes to them.

But the ultimate test of love is obedience; and to make full proof of Christ's promises, we must also keep Christ's words. One of the Saviour's special commands with reference to the gift of the Holy Ghost was, that the disciples "should not

depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me," and which was, that they should "be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Acts 1: 2–5. And upon their conscientious and devout observance of that, as well as all other commands of their Lord, depended their participation in these marvellous demonstrations. There is now another Jerusalem, in which God's promise is still fulfilling, and ever to be fulfilled—a spiritual city, with its everlasting Pentecost, where it is our business to tarry, wait, and pray, and to which the commands of Jesus direct us, that we may be endowed with power from on high. It is a city which we cannot enter but by baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and an unreserved submission of ourselves to the Lord as his willing disciples—a city where alone the joyous feasts of salvation are celebrated, where alone the perpetual sacrifice for sin is offered, and where alone the tribes of the Lord come up to the Holy One of Israel—the city of the great King, with its upper room of hallowed communion, where it is appointed that we continue "with one accord in prayer and supplication." That city is *the Church*, which Christ has founded, of which he has called and commanded all of us to be members, and in which he has given his word to be preached, and the sacrament of his body and blood to be celebrated, engaging there to fulfil his glorious promise to every devout and earnest worshipper. And if we would really become par-

takers of the Holy Ghost, and profit by the high privileges of salvation, we must enter and tarry there, and see to it that we keep our Lord's commandments with reference to the matter.

The early disciples obeyed, and were blessed. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:1–4. Jesus came to them, and the Father came to them, in all the illuminating and miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, and they were full of the energy and fire of eternal Godhead. There was much in their case that was peculiar; but, in substance, the promise is the same to all who love and obey Christ. The fire that sat on their heads was a never-dying fire—a flame which was to burn and brighten, in various measure, but in real efficacy, throughout all ages. That we are listening to the Gospel of salvation to-day, and that we are comforting ourselves with the hope of forgiveness and eternal life through Christ Jesus, is part of the living fruit of that same outpouring of Divine grace. In so far as we are Christians, we have already drunk in of that holy impulse, and been touched with that self-same holy fire. And still the never-failing promise holds, that if we will keep ourselves in the love of Jesus, his Father

will love us, and they will more and more come to us, and make their abode with us, so that our very bodies shall be the living temples of the Holy Ghost.

O let us see to it, then, that we do not fail to possess ourselves of the pre-eminent blessings which our dear Lord has put within our reach. The Holy Ghost, in all his teaching, comforting, sanctifying, and transfiguring power, is again proposed to us. He is proposed to us in the word, and he is proposed to us in the holy sacrament. If we love that Saviour we will obey him in doing this in memory of him. And if with good and obedient hearts we now draw near him, his promises are sure; and we shall have comfort, and power, and peace from God, and abiding fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the Holy Ghost.

Come, Holy Ghost, in love,
Shed on us from above
  Thine own bright ray!
Divinely good thou art;
Thy sacred gifts impart
To gladden each sad heart:
  O come to-day!

Come, light serene, and still
Our inmost bosoms fill;
  Dwell in this breast:
We know no dawn but thine
Send forth thy beams divine
On our dark spirits shine,
  And make us blest!

TRINITY SUNDAY.

John 3:1–15. **There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.**

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

HERE is one of the most striking passages in the New Testament. It is found only in the Gospel according to John. It differs from the ordinary teachings of Christ, in the distinguished character of the person concerned. Most of our Lord's disciples were

very plain people, of humble station, and moderate attainments. His hearers were usually the poor, the common, and the uncultivated. But here he encounters a man of another class—a man of high social position—a man of fortune, learned in the law, and invested with authority—one to whom the whole nation looked up with respect and veneration. And it is particularly interesting and instructive to observe how the Saviour conducted himself in such a presence, how he treated such a distinguished inquirer, and how he appeared in contact with one of the best representatives of the religious mind, culture, science, and scholarship of his age and country. He had been very successful with the people in general, and had shown a mastery in his encounters with them; but how would it be when he came to deal with so learned a ruler, and so great a sage? How would he answer such imposing greatness and authority? and with what success would he assert and maintain his claims before so exalted and venerable an inquisitor? It was an occasion to test his self-possession, his courage, his firmness, and his whole character and fitness to be confided in as an instructor and commander of the people. Had it been known that such an interview was pending, all Jerusalem would have been excited over it, and all classes would have hailed it as one of the great events of the great convocation. Nor should it be of less interest to us than it would have been to the people of the time.

To secure a full impression of the subject, it will be needful to contemplate it from *two sides:* first, the side of this man's approach to Christ; and, second, the side of Christ's treatment of him. In this order, therefore, let us take up the matter, looking to God for his gracious help.

I. The name of this man was Nicodemus. But this involves nothing material. He might have borne any other name without changing the nature of the case.

He is first mentioned in connection with the Saviour's wonderful insight into human character. Christ's complete knowledge of men in general, is instanced in his refusal to commit himself to those who believed him to be the Messiah; and his corresponding penetration into particular individuals, is instanced in the case before us.

Nicodemus is described as a Pharisee. The Pharisees were the richest, proudest, most numerous, most influential, and most sanctimonious religionists of the Saviour's time. They were the chief part of the governing class, the majority in the great council, as in almost everything else, and greatly venerated by the people. They embodied in their sect the most approved science, religion, and culture of Jewish society. Though John the Baptist called them a generation of vipers, and the Saviour levelled his severest maledictions against them, as corrupters, hypocrites, and whited sepulchres, whose temper and spirit were the very antipodes of true piety, they were

yet a much lauded, pretentious, and punctilious set, who claimed to be better than all other people. And with this party Nicodemus was thoroughly identified.

Nay, he was not only a Pharisee himself, but *a man of them*—a full-blown representative of the whole brood—whom the community in general, and the entire sect itself, accepted and acknowledged as a leader and light of the party.

He was also "a ruler of the Jews;" not a mere master of a synagogue, but one who held place in the highest and most august official body recognized by the Jewish people. From John 7 : 50, we learn that he was a member of the grand Sanhedrim, among whose reverend members he there appears as a speaker, and is pronounced "one of them." The Sanhedrim was the supreme ecclesiastical and civil tribunal, the final court for the interpretation and enforcement of the law, whether religious or secular. No one could be a member of it without being well advanced in life, perfect in all his faculties, tall and impressive in appearance, wealthy, and thoroughly learned in divinity, law, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and science and history in general, besides having passed creditably through a term of judicial administration in the lower and local courts. And as Nicodemus was one of these high and reverend judges, we behold in him one of the most exalted personages in Judea at the time—a very "Master in Israel." Nor can we fail to detect a tinge of wonderment on the part of the apostle, as he

wrote: "*This man* (οὗτος ἄνθρωπος) *came to Jesus.*" It was perhaps the sublimest visitor the Saviour ever had, particularly if estimated from a Jewish standpoint.

Nor are we left to conjecture what led to this visit. It was the Passover time. Great multitudes of people were at Jerusalem. It was well known that Jesus was there. He had but a little before made that triumphal entry into the city which created a sensation among all its inmates. He had appeared in the temple itself, and set up an authority there at which priests and people were astounded. Both by word and act he had shown signs of Divine power, which so impressed the beholders that "many believed in his name." Strangers from abroad added accounts of what they had seen and heard of him in the vicinity of their own homes. It was a time in which the Messiah's coming was generally expected. Many were convinced, and confessed, and maintained that he was the Messiah. And whether men would or not, all classes were forced into discussions of his doings and character. The grave members of the Sanhedrim itself could not avoid them. People came to them with their startling reports and opinions, and some judgment in the matter was variously besought. It would seem, indeed, as if these sages themselves had gone into solemn conference with each other about these remarkable manifestations; nay more, that they had actually come to an informal agreement in the case. Else what did Nicodemus mean when

he said, "Rabbi, WE *know* that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these wonderful things (σημεῖα) that thou doest except God be with him?" Whom did he include in this "WE," if he did not appear before the Saviour as the representative of the concurrent sense of his fellow councillors? What did his "WE KNOW" signify, if not intended to be taken as the common formula of official expression, given in the name of the whole order to which he belonged? This certainly was the current and characteristic mode of address employed by the Pharisees, and the professed keepers of wisdom in Israel, whenever they meant to give the authorized opinion of their particular guild; and it will be difficult to show good reason for taking it in any other sense here.

And was it not in fact true of the Jewish *savans* in general, that they did "*know*" exactly what Nicodemus thus stated? Did they not all *know* that Jesus was a teacher?—that he was very extraordinary in word and deed?—and that none but a Divinely aided man could ever do and speak as he did? That they had often talked over the matter, and again very recently and more seriously than ever, is most manifest. Nor is this the only place in which a conviction to the same effect exhibited itself.

It was, therefore, the confession of his order, which Nicodemus represented, and not a mere individual impulse of his own. It was, indeed, a private and unofficial interview; but still, the councillor, and the party to which he belonged,

were not wholly sunk. They both went along, and both spoke, as well in the substance as in the manner of what Nicodemus said. The whole thing wore an unofficial garb, so as not at all to commit the Sanhedrim as such; but it still had more than merely personal ends in view. As a public thing, there would of course have been great opposition to such an interview, and especially to such a confession; but, as a private matter, to get what farther light they could as to Christ's prophetic message, and especially as to his claims to be considered the promised Messiah-King, there was ample reason for encouraging just such a measure. And whether purely personal or semi-official, the impulse was reasonable, worthy, and befitting the circumstances. It was what Masters in Israel ought to have felt to be their duty, that they might judge and advise with propriety upon a matter of so much moment as the suspected Messiahship of this remarkable Galilean.

Not so favorably, however, are we impressed with the method that was adopted. Such greatness and erudition as was claimed for the members of Israel's supreme council, and freely awarded to them, we would expect to be fearless, independent, open, and decided. We hear so much, and such high-sounding praises, of the Republic of Letters, that we would naturally look for the highest courage and freedom in its citizens. But our most learned and most reputable men are frequently the most cowardly, afraid to commit themselves beyond the beaten round of stereotyped

ideas, and so solicitous about their reputation and the honor of their guild, that they cannot meet new truth by daylight. And even when conviction is clear and strong, the chances are that they will keep dark about it, and carry on their conferences concerning it in secret, until they are sure they can come out with it without endangering their good standing and influence. And just so it was in this case. Though the Christ was present, showing his Divine appointment and power by signs and wonders which flashed amazement and consternation, if not conviction, into every beholder; and though the evidences were such that the whole college of the Sanhedrim itself was compelled to admit in their hearts that here was a teacher who must needs be from God; instead of inviting him openly into their assembly to hear what he had to say to them, or of going as frank and faithful men to sit at his feet to learn what messages he had for them from Israel's Lord, they concluded to keep their convictions a secret, put on an air of indifference to what was going on, and even to sneer down the beliefs which many were asserting, whilst one of their chiefs stole away, under cover of the night, secretly to catechize the Saviour about his views and plans. Shame on such greatness! But so it is; great learning is often the mere instrument of great hypocrisy; and under the dazzling splendors of great attainments and position, there is often the most cowardly littleness. If men would be truly great, let them be honest, frank, open, and true

Let them not pretend to know what they do not know. And especially, let them not confine their confessions of the real state of their hearts to secrecy and darkness for fear of compromising their reputation or their party. If a man is convinced that Jesus is "a teacher come from God," and yet is ashamed to go to him by daylight, or studies to conceal from the public what he freely confesses in private, he is a weak man, a small man, a coward, though he should possess all the learning and fame of Hillel and Gamaliel.

Very inconsistently also did Nicodemus conduct his interview with the Saviour. If his confession was true;—if he and those for whom he spoke really *knew* that Jesus was a Divine Teacher, it was not his business to be raising objections to what Christ told him. What right has a mere man, however high in office or great in attainments, to undertake to dispute with an acknowledged messenger of Heaven? If Jesus was "a teacher come from God," his words were Divine words, and his doctrines God's doctrines; and human learning and greatness had nothing further to do with them than reverently to hear them, believe them, and to act accordingly. But such is the pride and vanity of earthly wisdom, that it must needs sit in judgment upon messages and teachings admitted to be Divine, and recast them in the moulds of its own philosophy, before it can be reconciled to them, or will consent to receive them. Nor are the instances rare or uncommon, even in our own day, in which pretenders to the

highest logic are the most illogical, and those who claim to be the wisest are guilty of the greatest stupidity. Admit that the Bible is a Revelation from God, and the rationalism which seeks to rasp its statements into proportion with imaginary foregone laws of credibility, is the most grossly irrational. Concede that Jesus is a Teacher from God, and, to criticize his enunciations of a second birth, turns even a Nicodemus into a self-condemned quibbler, and reduces the learned councillor below some of the humblest of his countrymen. The truth is, when we once know and confess that it is the Almighty who is speaking to us, we do but play the fool not to receive and obey whatsoever he says.

Nicodemus was also much crippled by his prejudices and pride of character. He was, indeed, one of the most candid and honest of his class. He was, perhaps, less a Pharisee, in what was the most offensive in the Pharisees, than most of those with whom he was identified. But the Pharisee was in him, leavening all his thoughts, and showing itself in all his utterances. His outset was promising, avowing as it did the secret conviction and presentiment of his own mind, and of the minds of his associates. And yet his very first word betrayed him. Though in the presence of a Divine Legate, he could not leave his Pharisaism behind. He must needs bring forward his "*we know*," as if the starting-point of wisdom were with his fraternity, and asserted his official "*we*," as if the individual Nicodemus had nothing spe-

cially personal at stake. And this was the hidden root of all his difficulty about what the Saviour affirmed. As applied to the heathen and the corrupt multitude, he could easily conceive the necessity of a new birth as a preliminary to the blessings of the Kingdom. But the Saviour made no discriminations in favor of particular classes. He placed all upon the same level. The great Nicodemus and his reverend colleagues were put upon the same basis with publicans and sinners. The condition was absolute in its terms, and the great councillor, and all his Pharisaic wisdom and sanctity, had no advantage whatever. This he could not brook. "No, no, Rabbi Jesus; though you are a teacher come from God, be not so fast. How can a man be born when he is old? I know that you are talking of a spiritual transformation under the figure of a natural birth; very good, I do the same. But when one is already a full-grown and ripe man in spiritual things, how can he go back to start as if he never had been born at all in these matters? Why, we holy councillors have grown old in religion. We have been practicing and studying it from our youth up. We are even the supreme judges of it. If there are any wise and good men on earth, certainly we are those men. The whole nation acknowledges and looks up to us as the sublimest examples of holiness and piety. We are, indeed, the very priests and scribes of God—the elders of his people—the expounders of his testimonies—the highest administrators of his law; and are we to be accounted

unborn babes in these things, and rated with such as have not yet made a beginning in religion! How can these things be? We are already ancients in piety. We have had our birth into it long ago. And having lived in it to mature age, how is it possible to repeat our birth?" Here was the seat of the trouble. It was not that he misunderstood the Saviour;—not that he misapplied a figurative form of speech;—not that he regarded the requirement laid down as inapplicable in general;—but that all his confident and cherished prejudgments of the sanctity and attainments of his devoted and learned fraternity were summarily set aside. It was not lack of comprehension, but the strength of prejudice — not want of understanding, but religious pride and self-righteousness—not incapacity to take in the spiritual ideas of the Saviour, but unwillingness to admit that Pharisaism was so inadequate and worthless. In a word, his prepossessions in favor of his own goodness, withstood the authority of "a teacher come from God."

Nor has the race of Nicodemuses become extinct. Every age has its men of culture, station, wealth, and gentility, who think themselves too good to be classed with publicans and sinners, whose confidence in their own rectitude and worth is stronger than their faith in God's words, and who excuse themselves from the requirements of practical and thorough godliness, on the basis of some self-judged exception in their own favor against what they admit to be just and necessary

in other cases. Nay, I put it to the consciences of all people of education and consequence, who have hitherto stood aloof from the more searching demands of religion, whether it has not been precisely upon Nicodemus's ground? From the lips of the Son of God we tell you, that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and you cheerfully admit the general applicability of the statement. But as to *your own case*, your thoughts revert to the principles of honor and correct living which govern in your circles—to the excellency with which you are freely credited by your fellowmen—to the high positions in society to which your careful manner of life has exalted you—to the deference and profound respect which you have always paid to virtue and religion—and you are puzzled to see how or why *you* should be denied a part in the blessed kingdom, just because you do not formally belong to the Church, or yield to all its particular ceremonies. And when you come to think of it, why you have always lived, and moved, and had your being in an atmosphere of good morals, and actually been practicing the rules of righteousness for many years, rendering it in a measure childish and absurd in your view that *you* should be required, at this late day, to begin the whole thing over again from the very alphabet, the same as the commonest, the rudest, and the most untutored of people. It strikes you like demanding of a man to return to his mother's womb to be born over again. You cannot understand

it, and refuse to yield to it, for no other reason, than that your prejudgments in your own favor have overbalanced your faith in the positive statements of Jesus.

II. But let us now contemplate this incident from the side of the Saviour's treatment of this distinguished visitor.

1. He met him with calmness and civility. The record is very briefly, and even abruptly given; but there is enough in the narrative to show that Nicodemus was in no way avoided or repulsed, and that the Saviour was neither disconcerted nor perturbed in the presence of this august "Master in Israel." Jesus knew who he was, and exactly under what circumstances and with what motives he came; for "he knew what was in man," and also what was in this particular man. He was quite aware of his high station, his great learning and authority, his Pharisaism, and the cowardly manner in which this interview was undertaken. He had the full measure and estimate of the venerable Rabbi before him the moment his presence was announced. Yet he consented to meet him, and did meet him, without discomposure, obsequiousness, or incivility, ready to hear his questions, and faithfully to answer them. He came to teach and to save great men, and learned judges, and consequential officials, as well as poor fishermen, plain citizens, and humble women; and he receives all classes alike, and deals with the highest the same as with the lowest, who are willing

to hear him, and to avail themselves of his Divine grace. His own word was, and from this he never deviated when on earth, and never will deviate while the earth remains: "*Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.*" John 6:37. The great and the learned may come, and the neglected and despised may come, for he is the Lord and Saviour of them all; and he will instruct the one, as he instructs the other, with equal calmness and with equal kindness and fidelity.

2. He spoke at once to the point of Nicodemus's search, and undeceived him in regard to the basis on which he and his fraternity were building their hopes. The people in general were looking for the Messiah. The preaching of John, especially, had aroused the whole nation to the subject. It was believed that he was then upon earth, and that the blessed kingdom would presently be revealed. There was no known man living who so fully answered the prophetic description as Jesus of Nazareth. Men were offended at his lowly circumstances, and at his unwillingness to acquiesce in the Jewish ideas of the Messianic administrations; but still there was a widespread suspicion, and in many a positive belief, that this Jesus was the Christ. And what had recently transpired in Jerusalem had greatly deepened and inflamed these suspicions and anticipations. Part of the Sanhedrim, and Nicodemus in particular, shared in these suspicions. They were at any rate secretly persuaded that Jesus was a Divine messenger, and that something reliable and direct might per-

chance develop itself from him in regard to the looked-for kingdom. With this thought and feeling Nicodemus addressed himself to the Saviour. And to what was thus in his heart the Saviour at once replied.

It is, indeed, a blessed thought, that Jesus knows what is in our hearts when we go to him, and that he is able to suit his favors exactly to our wants and questionings, even before we have time fully to express them. And it must have gone very far to impress Nicodemus still more deeply of the truth of what he had just confessed, to find the Saviour so promptly and fully anticipating what he was about to say, and answering so directly to the object of his visit. What he wanted was some decisive manifestation of the fact if Jesus was the Messiah—something upon which the Sanhedrim might feel warranted in accepting and proclaiming him the real King of the new empire—believing that it must needs be manifested first to the ancients of Israel, of whom he was one, and that its sublime blessings would certainly belong primarily to them. To this Jesus answered; but in such a manner as utterly to confuse and confound the cherished hopes of the great councillor; saying, in effect, that *no man would ever be able either to discern or to enter the blessed kingdom, without a new and special birth to that end.* In vain, therefore, would Nicodemus, or any one else, seek the demonstrations or the blessings on which he was counting, until this mysterious rebirth had been undergone. In vain was all his

learning, all his Pharisaic routine, all his long and punctilious discipline in the righteousness of his fraternity. It must needs pass for nothing in such a search and hope as that which had moved this visit. "Amen, Amen,"—all the verities of eternal truth were pledged to the absoluteness of the announcement, that whatever may be the birth, lineage, attainments, station, age, or consequence of a man, he must undergo a new birth unto Divine things, or the kingdom and all its blessings will forever elude his search and remain beyond his reach.

Thus, at a single stroke, the Saviour laid prostrate all this renowned councillor's greatness, and dashed out forever the fondest hopes of millions of the race. Nicodemus demurred; but it was no use. He proposed to argue the case, but "a Teacher come from God" had spoken, and there was no appeal from his verdict. He, and his confraternity, with all their erudition, and wisdom, and pretentious piety, and dearly purchased greatness, were conquered, on their own ground, by the very first words that came from the Saviour's lips. They were fairly met, they were legitimately vanquished, they were spiritually undeceived, and by one short and simple utterance from that youthful, modest, and unlettered Galilean, all their proud confidence was scattered to the winds. And so will it ever be with the logic, learning, reasonings, and fond anticipations of men, who profess to respect and honor Christ and his religion, without practically submitting themselves to his Gos-

pel. You may think yourselves strong, but you are weaker than babes in the arms of giants, if you propose to rest on anything short of a complete surrender to what you admit to be of God.

3. The Saviour expounded to Nicodemus the unalterable condition of admission into the blessed kingdom. That condition is a *birth*—the generation and coming to light of a breathing and self-uttering creature. The word of God is a spiritual seed, freighted with the life and Spirit of God. From its lodgment in the mind and heart a development ensues—a development of powers and activities which affect the whole standing and condition of the recipient, and a coming forth out of darkness into light, with new sensibilities, breathings, and cries. The process is a mysterious one. It cannot be traced by the human eye, or penetrated by the human understanding. All that the earthly senses can perceive is an inward disturbance, some anxious pangs, the tones of another voice, and a something which gives signs and tokens of life. The breathing breathes as it will, and thou hearest the voice of it, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born out of the Spirit. But there is, nevertheless, a real *birth*. For so it is written. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James 1:18; "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," 1 John 5:1; "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," 1 Pet.

1 : 23; "wherefore, as newborn babes," we "desire the sincere milk of the word, that" we "may grow thereby," 1 Pet. 2 : 1, 2.

But it is not only a birth, but a *rebirth*—a being "born *again*"—a new creation superinduced upon and in the pre-existing nature. There is the continuity of the original being, with all its capacities and faculties unchanged, but there is an "old man" which is laid off, and a "new man" which is put on. As Paul says: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5 : 17. It is a renovation in the springs of life, in the impulses and activities of the man, and in all the aims and endeavors of his being. The same faculties are there, and the same mental and physical instruments; but they are set to other and new purposes, and obey a new law. It is the natural man brought under another system, made to gravitate toward another centre, and animated with a new spirit and life. It is a birth *from* or *out of* (ἐκ) *the Spirit*, even the Holy Spirit of God. This is plainly stated; and no other agency is competent to bring it about. The idea is, that the Holy Ghost is ever enveloping us, brooding over us, and moving around us, in living and almighty power, speaking to us, in nature, in providence, and especially in the written and preached word, to impart to us a new life and strength, and to bring us forth out of bonds and darkness to liberty, light, enjoyment, and activity in the high things of God and saving truth. Whenever one is

so impressed, moved, and brought out into willing submission to the Divine word and will, he comes to the new birth, is born over again to a life which he did not previously have, and breathes, and utters himself, and gives symptoms of being and vitality, demanding a new chapter for his biography, and carrying him quite out of and beyond his former style of existence. But all of this new order of things is "*of* the Spirit," and "*to* the Spirit;" nay, it is the Spirit itself taking possession of man, refashioning him to its power, and manifesting in him a "new creation," as real as the emergence of the world from chaos, and as exclusively the work of God. Nothing which it is in the power of flesh, or the natural man, to produce—no blood, no culture, no attainments, no human reforms, no earthly discipline, however wise or rigid—can bring about this mysterious and wonderful transformation. It is altogether from God, and wrought by the Spirit of God.

It is a birth conjoined with Baptism—a birth "*of water*" as well as "of the Spirit;"—not of water only, nor of the Spirit apart from the appointed medium of its operations, but "of water *and* of the Spirit." Outward ceremonies are worthless merely as outward ceremonies; but as God's appointments, and as the instruments ordained of him for the letting forth and application of his Spirit, they are important and necessary, and cannot be dispensed with except at our peril. God has his own ways of working. He has established his own means of begetting and sustaining our

natural life; and without those outward means we cannot live at all. And so he has established his own means of begetting and sustaining our spiritual life in Christ Jesus. Among these, Baptism occupies a most conspicuous place. Disciples and members of Christ are to be made, as he himself has commanded, by "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28:19, 20. Hence Paul speaks of Christians as being "saved, by the washing of regeneration, *and* renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. 3:5; and Peter makes the strong assertion, that "*Baptism doth also now save us*," even as the ark of Noah saved him and his house, 1 Pet. 3:21; and the Saviour himself has inserted Baptism among the conditions on which his salvation is promised, saying, "He that believeth *and is Baptized* shall be saved." Mark 16:16. We do, therefore, err from the Scriptures and from Christ, if we undertake to separate the new birth from Baptism. God hath joined them together, and we may not put them asunder.

4. And in order to this renewal and restoration of men, the Saviour also explained to Nicodemus the true nature of the Messianic work. It was not to fight the Romans, to confront Cæsar with Cæsar's weapons, to overrun the world with human armies, to subdue the nations into vassalage to a few proud and overbearing Jewish aristocrats. He came on quite another errand, and for quite another business. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through

him might be saved." He came not to shed human blood, but that his own blood might be shed. He came not to trample out men's lives, or to pave his way to regal splendor with their broken skulls; but, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He came, indeed, to be "lifted up," but to be "lifted up," "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," *dead upon the stake;* that, looking to him with the eye of faith, men might be healed of the deadly sting of sin. His office was to teach men, as he was then teaching the learned Nicodemus; and to exemplify to them the wisdom and greatness of humble goodness, as he was then exemplifying it to this consequential Master in Israel; and to die as a sacrifice for their sins, as he shortly after did die upon Calvary's cross; and to set up a Divine and healing kingdom, the symptoms and prelibations of which he gave in his miracles and glorious resurrection. This was the true Messianic work, on the basis of which the renewing Spirit of grace cometh to men, and a regeneration to the diseased and ailing cosmos, and an eternal life and kingdom to them that believe. Great, glorious, massive, transforming truths, which not all the learning of Nicodemus ever dreamed of, and by the side of which all the boasted philosophies of men shrink away to nothingness!

5. And as the underlying foundation of all, Jesus taught this man the right doctrine concerning God. Nicodemus was not an atheist, nor yet an idolater. He believed in a God—the one God—

the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the eternal Sovereign and Proprietor of the universe, "from whom all things proceed, and on whom all creatures depend." But he had, as yet, a very limited and inadequate conception of the higher mysteries of the Godhead, which Christendom this day celebrates, and which are so vital to the whole system of the Christian Faith. He believed in a Spirit of God, and doubtless had some theory on the subject, by which all that the Scriptures said about the Spirit of God were understood of God himself. When Jesus talked of being "born of the Spirit," he had no difficulty in interpreting it as a Divine operation, and as a birth unto Divine things. He doubtless also had some shadowy notions about a Son of God, also called the Son of man, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet. But he had not yet learned to conceive the real character of that Divine-human sonship, and its true relations to the Godhead. He believed that Jesus was "from God" in the sense that the prophets were from God; but he yet needed to be taught that God is a Three-One God, and that, in this same young Galilean with whom he was conversing, the expressed Godhead dwelt, being come from heaven, and made incarnate for man's redemption. This higher divinity the Saviour therefore asserted concerning himself, and declared, by all the verities of God, that he was thoroughly and personally cognizant of all "heavenly things;" that he "came down from heaven;" that he was even then in some sense "in heaven," though a Son of man on

earth, and about to be crucified by its inhabitants; that he was *the Son of God*, as none but himself is the Son of God—"his only begotten Son;" and that no mere man ever did, or ever can ascend into heaven, or come down from heaven, in any such sense as that in which *He* was in heaven, and came from it. He thus distinctly and unmistakably set before Nicodemus, and before us, for our adoring faith, GOD, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost:—The Father, made of none: neither created nor begotten: The Son, of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten: The Holy Ghost, of the Father, and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding: one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts; in which Trinity, none is before or after other; none greater, or less than another; but the whole three Persons coeternal together, and coequal: so that, in all things, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.

It was enough. Henceforth the learned Pharisee was an humbler and a better man, a seeker of the kingdom of God in its true character. The next we hear of him is in his place in the Sanhedrim, claiming for Jesus that he should be heard before being condemned, and subsequently uniting with one of his colleagues in procuring an honorable burial for him after he was crucified. The truth had made an exalted conquest, and Jesus had proven himself not only a teacher come

from God, but the very Son of God, the Messiah of Israel.

So, then, let us receive Him, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 16 : 19–31. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

MOST people receive the Saviour's discourse concerning the Rich Man and Lazarus as a Parable. But the Scriptures do not call it such. The language has all the forms of veritable history. The Lord says, "*there was* a certain rich man," and "*there was* a certain beggar named Lazarus." And any

interpretation which sets aside the historical truthfulness of what is said, appears to me to browbeat the text, and to turn the edge of a very important part of Christ's word. To take it as a rehearsal of actual occurrences, accords best with the language employed, and begets for it a certainty and wealth of import which is otherwise much impaired. It presents to our contemplation a picture of suffering faith on the one hand, and of prosperous ungodliness on the other, and of the consequences of each beyond this present world, which is the more impressive if regarded as real matter of fact. It is at any rate a most startling and impressive sketch, perfect in its several parts, unveiling to us the mysteries of a future life, and setting forth how the conduct and affections of men in this world stand related to that which comes after death. And may God give us grace to view it with becoming seriousness!

We find, then, two characters:

I. In Life.
II. In Death.
III. In Eternity.

The first of these is "a certain rich man." His name is not given. This world's greatness is nothing with God. He was "rich;" which in itself was neither a merit or a demerit. It is not a sin to be rich. Job was rich; Abraham was rich; David was rich; Joseph of Arimathea was rich; and we read in apostolic history that "many rich men" believed, and were Christians. There

is no more impiety in being rich than in being poor. Sin does not lie in outward accidents. There are poor wicked people as well as rich wicked people, and flagrant sin among beggars as well as among nurslings of fortune. A rich man has his peculiar temptations; the poor man also has his; and one may be a servant of the Lord as well as the other.

This rich man was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." But his handsome clothes were no harm, if they became his station, and did not draw away his heart to vanity. Religion does not depend upon the cut, color, or material of our dress. We may serve God in any clothing which is becoming and decent. There is no more sin in the king's robes, than there is merit in the beggar's rags. Satan has children who have not where to lay their heads, as well as others who wear purple and fine linen. Even to fare sumptuously every day is not necessarily a crime, though those who give themselves much to these outward enjoyments are not apt to be much given to spirituality and a proper Christian life.

The great defect of this man was not his riches, nor his costly clothing, nor yet his plentiful possession of the "good things" of this life, but his lack of a true fear of God, and of proper reference to eternity. A theoretical believer he no doubt was. He was a son of Abraham—a Jew—perhaps a Pharisee;—but he had not the root of the matter in his heart. He had no humble, self-abasing,

sympathetic trust in God, and no real experience of his dependence upon the unmerited grace of God.

It appears that he was much taken up with his luxurious living. He loved himself and his comforts more than God, and he had no higher objects of life than just this sumptuous vanity and pleasure. His heart was not on things above, but on things on the earth. These absorbed his attention. He thought it a great thing to be rich, and to be clothed as he was, and to fare as he did, and had no desire nor care beyond the "good things" which he possessed.

As a consequence, he was heartless, uncharitable, and without sympathy for the poor and needy. Lazarus lay at his gate, sick and dying, desiring to be fed only with the crumbs that fell from his sumptuous board; yet he let the miserable beggar die there without caring for him. As one table of the Law is fulfilled by loving God supremely, so the other table is fulfilled by loving our neighbor as ourselves. But this rich man violated the first by having his heart taken up with his "good things," and the second by withholding mercy from the suffering poor.

True faith works by love. Charity is one of its necessary and inevitable fruits. It shows its vitality in a tender heart, and in deeds of love performed for God's sake. He who has really tasted of the Divine compassion to himself, cannot fail to be touched with corresponding compassion for the suffering and destitute around him. He who has his treasure in heaven will reflect the same in

his life and deeds on earth. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" John 3:17. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them none of those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:15–17. It is of the very life of faith to soften the heart—to touch it with a feeling of mercy—to cause it to break forth in sympathetic regard for all men, and especially for such as are in suffering and need. But nothing of this appears in this rich man. He has plenty himself, and is comfortable in his estate and friends, and cares for no one else. He is at ease in his fine linen and good fortune, and will not disturb himself about the wants and woes of other people, leaving poor Lazarus to die among the dogs, uncomforted and unfed.

No special crimes are charged against this man. Refinement, intelligence, respectability, and prominence in the ordinary Pharisaic religiousness of his day, doubtless were his. There is no appearance of dissent from the common traditions and belief of his nation. He paid his tithes, supported religion, and was a distinguished citizen of the Jewish commonwealth, and much looked up to by the community around him. He was not a coarse unbeliever—an atheist—a vulgar opponent

of religion and piety. He was not a profane man, not a scoffer, not an extortioner and oppressor, not a blasphemer, murderer, or drunkard. None of the offensive sins which stand out in the lives of the grossly wicked are laid to his charge. He was what the world calls "a gentleman," and one who would pass with modern Christendom as a respectable member of the Church. But his highest interest and pleasure centred in his luxuries, possessions, and estate. Having plenty, he enjoyed it, and gave himself no particular concern about anything else.

The other character described is the exact reverse of this rich man. It is a case of extreme poverty and external wretchedness. Here we have rags for royal purple, running sores in place of the fine linen, want and starvation instead of the daily sumptuous fare, and association with dogs for the gay circle of a rich man's friends. The case is one of abject poverty, but not meritorious on that account. The poorest men are often the worst men—lazy, dishonest, profane, envious and depraved—the filth about their bodies being a fair index to the deeper filth of their souls. Poverty and want, in themselves, can no more commend to God, or take a man to heaven, than riches and plenty. It was also a case of great bodily affliction and helplessness. The sufferer was laid (ἐβέβλητο) at the rich man's gate; that is, placed there by others, thrown down there. The expression indicates helplessness on his part, and rude desertion on the part of others. Wholly dis-

abled and suffering himself, he was dropped there and left. He was also covered with sores, an offensive burden to himself and to others. But neither was there merit in all this. Misery is not virtue. Herod died in misery, but that gave him no better standing in the eye of God, and no title to salvation. This man was doubtless also much ill-treated. He certainly did not receive the pity and commiseration which he should have had. But neither was there anything meritorious in his wrongs. Even the unworthiest of men may be wronged. And though the helpless misery of this man was so great that the very dogs pitied him, there was nothing in all his wretchedness to recommend him to the saving regard of heaven. There has been many a one equally miserable and neglected, who was no better furnished for eternity than the rich man. The virtue of this beggar was not in his being a beggar, but in the spirit, temper, and faith in which he lived. It was this that commended him, that, being thus destitute, miserable, and wronged, he took it all patiently, in humble reliance on God as his only helper and friend, who would in due time relieve him.

We know something of the temper and spirit of the common herd of beggars, particularly when their demands are not gratified. We know something of their feelings toward the rich, their fault-finding with Providence, their ingratitude, their selfishness, and their deceit. But we behold nothing of the sort in this case. It was an instance of extreme want and woe, and of wicked ill-treat-

ment and neglect. Yet we find no complaint, no railing at the heartless ones who dealt so uncharitably with him, no impatience, no resentment. Though dying with hunger and disease at the very door of wealth and plenty, he utters not an imprecation, brings no railing accusation, indulges no feelings of cursing toward God or toward man. And though the victim of combined and extreme adversities, he still found cause for thankfulness, if for nothing else, yet for the grateful touch of the tongues of pitying dogs.

Such meekness, patience, and submission to his lot, could only come from faith in God, and an humble trust and hope in that eternal goodness which orders all things for the best, and will not leave suffering believers always comfortless. Such a faith is a wonderful power to console, sustain, transform, and save. It stands fast when everything else fails. The purple, and fine linen, and sumptuous fare of the rich are as nothing in comparison. By it kingdoms have been subdued, the mouths of lions stopped, the violence of fire quenched, the armies of aliens put to flight, the dead brought to life again, and men in all extremities of torture have refused to accept deliverance, looking for the better resurrection. And as blessed worthies of old had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings, and bonds, and imprisonments, and were stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, and caused to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, dwelling in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens

and caves of the earth, yet never thought themselves unhappy, and still continued to labor and pray for the world that so mistreated them; so this sufferer at the rich man's gate was upheld, and soothed, and made easy in his mind and temper, by reason of the same assurance of ample and eternal recompense at last for all his griefs. He was therefore one of God's poor, rich in faith, and in the fruits of earnest trust in the Lord of Israel.

The Saviour mentions his name. God knoweth them that are his. He has graven them upon the palms of his hands. They may be poor, unknown, despised, and neglected among men. People may not care to know who they are, or by what names they are called. But God knows them, and writes their names in his books.

Such, then, are the two characters: the rich man in his purple and fine linen, and Lazarus in rags and sores;—the one faring sumptuously every day, the other perishing with exposure, neglect, and hunger;—the one happy in his wealth and comfort, and caring nothing for the poor and suffering; the other the very embodiment of misery, yet patient, peaceful, and content through trust in God and the hope of a better world.

II. Let us follow them now to the end of their earthly history. For to neither of them did matters continue long as they were. The things that are seen are temporal. No man has here any continuing city. Life is short; and whatever its estate, it is soon over. Even those who live the

longest, are quickly old, and the story is soon told. We all do fade as the leaf, and are carried away as with a flood.

"*The beggar died.*" Believers go down to the grave as well as others. For one so afflicted and helpless as Lazarus, death was a blessed release. But likewise for those of God's people who are the most prosperous and comfortable on earth, death is a real gain. No believer loses anything by it but sorrow, disease, pains, and disabilities. Our dying day is a blessed day, if we be found in the way of righteousness. People are often filled with dismay at the idea of dying. Nature may shudder at death; but we need not fear it. It is but a sleep; and, like sleep, it comes without any more consciousness of it on our part than when we sink to quiet rest at night. And as God prepared for us a loving and tender reception when we came as unknown and helpless babes into this world, he will also arrange for us a kind and loving reception into the other world also.

Lazarus had no earthly attendants to minister to him in his last hours; but that made no appreciable difference. It matters not when, where, or how a believer dies. He is in every case equally safe and equally blessed in his death. There are some forms of death which impress and affect us more than others; but the difference to the departing one is of very small account. At best, very little can be done for one that is dying. We can only watch and wait in solemn silence for the last breath. And Lazarus, neglected and forsaken, is

no worse off in his decease than one sinking to his rest amid loving friends. Angels are the helpers of the dying who die in the Lord. They surround the bed of the departing one, and uphold him in his exit, and waft his spirit to its home. So, when Lazarus died, he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

What became of the body of Lazarus is not told us. Neither did it matter what disposition was made of it. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," is the law; and it is equally fulfilled in every case, let the proceeding be what it may. Lazarus may have been cast into a trench on the spot where he died; nay, says one, "it is well if they that let the dogs lick his sores, did not let them gnaw his bones." But it was all one to the man himself, for whom there remained the same blessed future in either case.

"*The rich man also died.*" His wealth, and friends, and sumptuous fare could not save him from the grave. Death is as much at home in the houses of the wealthy and great, as in the hovels of the poor. Whatever else riches may command, they cannot buy exemption from death. The rich man outlived Lazarus a little while, but his time came, and there was nothing that could release him from this common debt which every one must pay.

The rich man "was buried;" that is, with due style and ceremony. Attendants were plenty when he died, and many followed his remains solemnly to the tomb.

III. We come, then, to the estate of these two men after death.

If this narrative is capable of proving anything, it proves that death is not the end of man's existence. There is a life beyond the life we now live —a life beyond death—of which this present life is but the vestibule. These existences of ours, though they may seem to be extinguished in the tomb, are not extinguished there. Death only transfers to another scene and form of being. Though our mortal bodies dissolve, there is something of us which lives on, and to which death cannot put an end. For good and bad alike there is another life, and a continuity of being after the body dies. The beggar died, but still lived on in another state. The body left behind, there still was the same Lazarus whom the angels carried to his place of rest. The rich man died and was buried, but his being was perpetuated, and his existence continued.

> The human soul is like a vestal's fire,
> Lit with a lamp that never can expire.

Hence the Saviour could say, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Matt. 10 : 28.

And the life which men live after death is real life—a state of consciousness—not a condition of mere sleep or nonentity. The rich man could still see, and hear, and feel, and speak. Lazarus was capable of being "comforted," and of enjoying communion with other saints who had died ages

before him. We may not be authorized to put too literal a construction upon the circumstantial details of the narrative. It must be conceived after the manner of the mysterious world to which it relates. But so much is clear, and is so essentially inwrought with the whole account that we cannot be mistaken in accepting it as the teaching of Christ himself. Death demolishes only the body, not the mind, not the soul, not the real man. Those who have fallen asleep have not perished. They still exist. God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but he is not a God to people who have ceased to be, but only to the living. Abraham, then, still lives, and so do all other men who ever did live. How and where they live, we cannot tell; but they live.

Retributive, also, is the life beyond death. It is a life of comfort and happy association to Lazarus, and of torment to the rich man. It is a sad, sad world to those who die in sin. In hell the rich man lifts up his eyes, being in torments. He remembers that in his lifetime he had his good things, and that now they have gone from him forever. He sees Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom, but at a vast distance off. He cries to Abraham—the only instance of praying to saints found in the Scriptures—but it is a fruitless cry, as such prayers are, which brings only denial and greater hopelessness. He thinks of his five brethren yet on earth, whom he had misled into the ways of ruin, and dreads to have them come where he is, lest his condition should be made the

more unbearable by their presence in suffering of which he was largely the occasion.

According to the Saviour's teaching, then, there is a hell; and there is torment there, and an absence of all good.

But there is a heaven also. Abraham is there, and Lazarus, and the good and pure-hearted of all lands and all ages who have gone from the earth. There is comfort there; for Lazarus is comforted. There is joyous fellowship and loving communion there; for Lazarus leans on Abraham's bosom in the circle of those gathered round the repast of eternity. There are plenty of good things there, for even the woes and wrongs of Lazarus are recompensed to him, while the blessedness stretches onward through unending ages.

Between these two states after death there is no exchange of occupants. A vast gulf or chasm separates them, which is at once impassable and incapable of being bridged or removed. There is, then, no such thing as *purgatory*, in which the less wicked shall suffer for a while till purged by fire and then transferred to heaven. So, likewise, there is no such thing as the final restoration of the wicked. On whichever side of the gulf men go into eternity, on that side of it they must remain forever. The distinct word from the side of the blessed to those on the other side is: "They which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." The gulf is "great," and it is "fixed." And the manner in which we employ this life,

is that which settles and determines on which side of it we are to be in the next. The rich man in his lifetime revelled in his wealth and luxury, neglected God, his revelation, and his poor, and died in impenitence and uncharity; and the result beyond the grave was destitution, flame, and torment, without hope of relief. Lazarus lived in humbleness, poverty, and suffering, seeking a better country, looking at things not seen as yet, having respect to the recompense of the reward, and meekly waiting the will of God, on whom his soul reposed; and the result after death was comfort and remuneration in heaven. As they sowed in this world, so they each reaped in the other. And it is the same in every case. After sin and impenitence on earth, unrepented of during life, comes hopeless despair and misery in eternity; and after a life of faith, patience, self-denial, and earnest seeking unto God and the favor of God, comes the comfort, peace, and blessed fellowship of Paradise. As men live here, so is their inheritance beyond the grave. "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. 6:7, 8.

Nor need we expect any other advantages for helping us successfully through a life of faith and piety to the joys of heaven, than those which we now have in the revelation God has given, and the light and means already in our possession. We have Moses and the prophets—the Law and the

Gospel—which are amply sufficient to set us right, and to keep us right, if we do but give heed to them as they deserve and demand. Lazarus had nothing but these, and by them he found his way to Abraham's bosom. What they did for him, they were competent to do for the rich man also, and for every one; but the trouble was that he did not "hear them"—did not seek to understand and follow them as his directory and guide. He pleads, indeed, that if some other appliance had been used, or some messenger from the dead had come to him, the result would have been different. But it was a groundless notion, unfounded in truth. The means God has given are complete and ample; and if men are not saved by them, it is sheer folly to believe that the supplement here suggested would accomplish the end. The Pharisaism, Rationalism, or other subterfuges of man's depraved heart, by which Moses and the prophets are set at nought, would be at no loss for pretexts and expedients to set aside the testimony of a messenger from the dead also. There was once another Lazarus raised from the dead; and yet these same Jews went about to kill him. Jesus rose from the dead, and gave forth the most convincing demonstrations of the fact, as well as of his being both Lord and Christ; and yet they would not acknowledge him or receive his word. It was, therefore, the pure truth which Abraham announced to the rich man, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." It is not

inadequacy of the means, or deficiency in the testimony men have, that sends so many to perdition. The difficulty lodges at quite a different point. Men in their perverseness undertake to sit in judgment upon God, claim to know better than eternal wisdom, nurse their rebellion against the Almighty, adventure to ungod the Deity, so as to make the Eternal One their slave instead of Sovereign; thus building up barricades against salvation, and shutting the doors of mercy on their souls. It is not that the testimony of Moses and the prophets is uncertain or inadequate; but because men are too proud, too self-sufficient, too much in love with their own ways and pleasure, to hear them. This is the inexcusableness, that when they know God, they glorify him not as God, and withhold the worship due unto him. Nothing can exceed the simple Word and Sacraments. In them the very life of Heaven is let forth to enter into us. Through them comes everlasting salvation, if we will but accept and take it. And if men will not profit by these, neither would they profit by any other arrangement.

Here, then, is what is said of us in Heaven: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And shall we not lay it to heart, and profit by it? We are on our way to a mysterious eternity. We cannot turn back, or avoid what is inevitably bound up with our existence, namely, to make personal trial of the future which is here disclosed to us. Nor do we know how soon we shall be summoned away to that world of

reaping what here we sow. By all that is precious, therefore, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

Accept, O Lord, thy servant's thanks
For Thy enlivening Word,
By Thy most Holy Spirit taught,
By holy prophets heard.
That Word in Thy recording Book
From age to age descends:
Her teaching here Thy Church begins,
And here her teaching ends.

Whate'er of truth the soul can need
To clear her darkling sight,
Whate'er to check the wandering feet,
And guide their course aright;
Whate'er of fear the bad to daunt,
Of hope the good to cheer:
All that may profit man, O Lord,
Thy bounty gives us here.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 14 : 16–24. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many : and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come ; for all things are now ready.

And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it : I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them : I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind

And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

THIS parable belongs to the table talk of Jesus. As we frequently find him in the relation of a guest at distinguished entertainments, so we also find him improving these, as all other occasions, to teach the truth, rebuke the selfishness and vanity of men, and lead the souls of inquirers into the way of salvation. We have here,

I. A Picture of Divine Grace;
II. A Commentary upon Human Perverseness.

From the earliest ages it has been common to speak of God's merciful provisions for fallen men under the imagery of a feast. Thus Isaiah sung: "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." And so familiar was this conception to the ancient Jews, that many of them were led to indulge the grossest notions about feasting and banqueting in the kingdom of the Messiah. Many of the Rabbins took it literally, and talked and wrote largely about the blessed bread, and plenteous wine, and delicious fruits, and the varieties of fish, flesh, and fowl, to be enjoyed when once the Messiah should come. It was to this coarse eating and drinking that the man referred whose exclamation—"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God"—called forth this significant parable. But, although the Jews much perverted the idea, it still was a proper and expressive figurative representation of Gospel blessings. The Saviour himself takes up the idea, approves and appropriates it, and proceeds to speak of the provisions of grace as a δειπνον—a supper—a feast—a banquet.

Very significant also is this imagery. A feast is not a thing of necessity, but of gratuity. If a man makes an entertainment to which he invites his friends and neighbors, he does it out of favor and good feeling towards them. It is because he takes an interest in their happiness, and is pleased to minister to their enjoyment. And precisely of

this nature is the blessed Gospel. God was under no obligations to propose such favors. They are the products of his own great goodness. It is because he loves what he has made, and takes pleasure in making all his creatures happy. He is not willing that fallen men should perish in their sins. It is because he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, and through him a feast of everlasting joy to all people.

A banquet is furnished at the cost of him who makes it. And so the Gospel comes to men free of expense to the guests. All that it embraces is proposed without money and without price. People sometimes think it hard that they are required to give heed to God's calls under such fearful penalties. They are disposed to complain of the demands made of them in order to be saved. But they do injustice to the grace of God. They forget that all their misery, blindness, and poverty is their own, and that they are in themselves utterly lost and undone. They overlook the great beneficence that is involved in making their salvation possible, and that the cost of it is all on the side of him who might justly have left them to suffer the consequences of their iniquities. And difficult and trying as it may be to our perverse hearts to comply with the laws and conditions of the feast, it is a free and unmerited gift. It is the generous and loving provision made by a heavenly friend, who wishes us well, and who has taken the whole burden and cost upon himself, simply to make us happy.

A banquet also implies the spreading of a table, plentifully supplied with all inviting, wholesome, and pleasant viands. It is an occasion when the very best things, and in the greatest profusion, are set before the guests. True, "the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink;" but it is to our inner life what the most precious viands are to the body. The soul has appetites, and needs meat and drink as well as the physical man. It must be fed, nourished, and refreshed with its appropriate spiritual aliment, or the man must starve and die, notwithstanding the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And this life-giving spiritual food is what God has provided for us in the Gospel. It is a soul-feast, wherewith he entertains and refreshes his guests, satisfying them through his sacred table, consoling and strengthening them, as Luther says, through the sacrament of his body and blood, so that nothing is wanting to full satisfaction and joy.

Jesus is the bread of life, which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever. "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And Jesus himself says: "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and

he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (See John 6 : 27–58.) These are therefore most precious viands provided in the Gospel, life-giving viands, satisfying viands, "meat which endureth unto everlasting life." It is, therefore, a proper *feast*—a bountiful spiritual repast—living bread, and wine to make glad the heart, and oil to make the face to shine, and every species of heavenly aliment to cheer, revive, and strengthen to everlasting life.

A banquet is also a social thing. It involves the coming together of multitudes to exchange civilities, to form and strengthen fellowships, and to enjoy communion with each other, as well as with the maker of the feast. The Gospel embraces a holy fellowship of believers with believers, and of each with God. It embraces a coming together of men in common brotherhood and communion with each other and with the Master, as full of sweetness, cheer, and blessedness as the viands of which they are invited to partake. For we, being many, are one body, joined together around one table, partakers together of one common bread, and have fellowship one with another, and with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost. Christianity is a social religion. Saints are a community, segregated from the common world, and made members one of another, as they are members of Christ and partakers of his life. They are all brethren in the Lord, and happy in each other, as they are happy in their Redeemer.

One family we dwell in him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of his host have crossed the flood
And part are crossing now.

Joyful, by faith, we join our hands
With those that went before;
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore.

In one fraternal bond of love,
One fellowship of mind,
The saints below and saints above
Their bliss and glory find.

But it is not only a supper; it is "*a great supper.*"

It is great in its Author. In proportion to a man's rank and estate do we expect to find the entertainment to which he invites us. If he be a great and rich man, we expect a great and rich entertainment. If a king invites us to his table, we naturally count on finding a royal board, royally furnished, and guests of becoming rank and magnificence. But the maker of this feast is God himself, in Christ Jesus. His Divine greatness and beneficence are here meant to be fully expressed. The invitation to it is from him. And as never a feast was made by a being so exalted, or a king so great, it must needs be "a *great* supper."

It is great in the preparations made for it. It was thought about from all eternity. It was announced and prophesied of for four thousand years. And for all that time men and nations were being trained for it, and the greatest kings of earth, and angels from heaven, were busy executing offices and commissions with reference to it, and the whole course of this world's administrations, in Church and State, Jewish and Gentile, was ordered and influenced in view of it.

> For this, laws from the skies were published, were repealed;
> On earth, kings, kingdoms rose, kings, kingdoms fell;
> Famed sages lighted up the Pagan world;
> Prophets from Zion darted a keen glance
> Through distant age; saints travailed; martyrs bled;
> By wonders, sacred Nature stood controlled;
> The living were translated; dead were raised;
> Angels, and more than angels, came from heaven;
> And O! for this descended lower still!

And, judging of the feast by the vastness and magnificence of the preparations, we cannot but call it "a *great* supper."

It is great in the number of guests invited. He "bade *many*." The invitation went out through Adam, Seth, Enoch, and Noah, to all the antediluvian world, and to the tribes sprung from those who survived the flood. It was the special joy of the house of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for many centuries. It was the grand hope of the millions over whom David and Solomon and the kings of Israel reigned. Jonah carried it to Nineveh, that great city, and Daniel to Babylon. John the Bap-

tist preached it to the multitudes who came to his baptism. Paul carried it to the cities of the Gentiles, from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum. The letters of the prophets and apostles went out burdened with it to all the ends of the earth. And this day all the continents of the earth, and all the islands of the sea, and the ships that float on the sea, have in them the messengers and emissaries of the great King, inviting as many as they can find to give ear and come, and enjoy the banquet which Almighty goodness has provided for them. Millions and millions of men, and women, and children, of all ages and races, have been called, and are still being called, to be God's guests at this Divine feast. And when we attempt to sum up the number of invitations, or even of those who have accepted the gracious overture, we must needs regard it as "a *great* supper."

It is great in the condescension shown to the persons invited. That a king should royally entertain kings, or princes, or nobles, or thus honor such as approximate his own high rank, or even such worthies as have deserved well at his hands, would be a thing to be admired and specially noted. We have also heard of royal personages condescending to bestow favors of this kind upon very humble subjects.

But here is a more wonderful display of beneficence and grace. If God had provided such a banquet for the angels and principalities of heaven, or sent out his royal invitations to pure beings and deserving subjects, and the virtuous poor of his

realm, it would have been a thing of marked and sublime privilege. But this feast is for rebels, enemies, and criminals. Not one is called to it but such as belong to a guilty and fallen race, all of whom have gone away from their rightful allegiance, and set themselves up against their sovereign, and deserve only to be consigned to everlasting perdition for their sins. Such mercy, such goodness, such condescension, stands out unparalleled in the history of eternity. It was beyond all anticipation, and beyond all thought of men or angels, fixing upon this feast pre-eminently the characteristic of "a *great* supper."

But it is still greater in what it proposes to the guilty ones for whom it is made. It not only offers kindness to those who have lost all claim to it, and clemency toward their crimes, and helpful favor for them in their great poverty and distress; but it is a proposal to blot out all remembrance of their guilt; to forgive all their sins; to take away from them their evil hearts; to plant in them a new and holy life of love, obedience, and blessedness; to adopt them as God's own dear children; and to make them partakers of his own life, joy, love, and fellowship. It proposes to transform, purify, exalt, and glorify them, as kings and priests, and to make them judges and coregents with the only begotten Son of God. It is intended to restore to them their forfeited lives, and restore in them the defaced and distorted image of their Maker, that from lost sinners they may be accepted saints, sanctified and transfigured with

heavenly excellencies, and, delivered from sin, death, and the power of the devil, that they may be the Lord's chosen ones, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and happiness, even as Christ has risen from the dead, and now lives and reigns to all eternity. And when we consider what poor, lost, forlorn, and condemned beings men are, and what they become, and are hereafter to become, through what God offers and gives in this sacred banquet, well may we call it "a *great* supper."

There have been many magnificent entertainments. Plutarch tells of one at which there were ninety thousand guests. Herodotus tells of one at which a hundred oxen were offered in sacrifice, and in which all the people of Sicyon took part. Diodorus Siculus tells of one at which two hundred thousand persons were sumptuously fed, and during which the whole city of Agrigentum was one grand blaze of joyous illumination. But all these vast and astounding feasts were but mean and ridiculous mimicries played by children, in comparison with that which God hath instituted in the Gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Such then, in brief, is the picture of Divine grace given in the text. Would to God that what it portrays of man's behavior towards it were equally inviting and satisfactory! But alas for the contrast between the greatness of the Divine beneficence and the manner in which people respond to it!

It was the custom, in ancient times, when a

feast was in contemplation, to send word of it to those for whom it was intended; and afterwards, when everything was prepared, to send a second time to call those who had been bidden. This peculiarity is noted in the parable, and well illustrates an important feature of the Gospel. The summons to this feast did not take the world by surprise. For many ages it had been foreannounced, and a people designated to partake of it. And "when the fulness of the time was come," the proper messengers were despatched to call in the guests. Apostles, evangelists, and holy men of God were duly commissioned and sent out with the joyous tidings, "Come; for all things are now ready." We would, of course, expect that all would promptly and gladly respond and go. So distinguished a Being, offering the favor of such an unparalleled entertainment, and going to so much trouble and expense for their benefit, ought not to be treated lightly, or on any account declined. But, sad to tell, "they all with one consent began to make excuse."

Again the messengers were sent, and this time to "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind," giving to the beneficence of the offer a still wider stretch; but yet with very imperfect success. There yet was room which needed to be filled. And still again the servants received command to go, even into the highways and hedges of the common world, and to use all their powers to constrain men to come in to the glorious supper. Those servants went, and to this hour they

are out and active, with all manner of argument seeking to compel their hearers to come to the great banquet of Jehovah's grace. Some have accepted the offer. Every week for now eighteen hundred years has witnessed the coming in of certain ones, who are now eating and drinking at the table of the King. But as it was with those first called, so it has been with the vast majority ever since, and so it is with the most of men even now. God's supper is ready, and the call to it is pressed with urgency, but people make excuses, and do not come. That old business which Adam begun in Eden, and which was man's first attempt to exculpate himself from conscious guilt, is still carried on by the great body of his descendants. People have no mind for salvation. God makes overtures and proposes favors, and they make excuses, and insult the best friend they have in the universe.

One has bought a piece of ground, an earthly inheritance, and this he makes paramount to that land of rest purchased with the Saviour's blood. Another has bought five yoke of oxen, and these must have his attention in preference to the making good of his title to the princedoms and regencies of eternity. And a third has married a wife, and puts aside the joys and fellowship of heaven for the miserable lusts and pleasures of this fleeting life.

The many have too much to do, too many pressing cares, too many honorable engagements preoccupying their attention, and so cannot comply

with the calls of God. Men are very zealous and energetic in these days for what they call "material interests." Schemes of industry, commerce, invention, art, science, politics, and enterprises for the common weal, and plans for bettering this and improving that, fill up their heads, and hearts, and hands. And so absorbed are they with these earthly affairs, and bedizzened with the laudableness of devotion to them, as to put from them the claims of God and their souls, and yet think they are a very good sort of people. Such useful citizens, such respectable men of business, such thinkers for the comfort of their fellow-citizens, and for the welfare of the State, are forsooth not to be expected to give their time and thoughts to piety and to God! Of course, *they* are to be excused! But, alas for thee, deluded man, if with thy lands, or thy oxen, or thy "material interests," or even with thy learned investigations, though they should be in divinity itself, thou hopest to compensate for thy neglect of the calls and invitations of thy Maker! Thou dost but insult the Master, who hath said, "None of those men shall taste of my supper."

But others are so happy in the objects of their earthly affection, so blessed with things of their own, that they see no reason to disturb or burden themselves with attention to these sacred matters. Why, the world was made to be enjoyed! God would not have created for us all these pleasant things if it were not excusable in us to make the best of them while we can! Why should we in-

commode our pleasant homes and joyous circles with religion's rigid rules? Why deny ourselves those delights which our souls take to, and in which there is nothing immoral, or offensive to the law, or to the good order of society? Why should we just at once part with all our pleasures, and leave off gayety, and abandon the playhouse, and put out ourselves on the uninviting discipline of what the Church calls piety? Surely the good Father in heaven does not wish to make us unhappy. He will not be offended with what harms no one, and yet is so delightful to us! He will *excuse* us! Alas, they have married themselves to earthly loves, and lusts, and vanities; and so they "cannot come." Effeminate pleasures, though mingled with pains, and transient as the honeymoon, are their apology for letting go their chance to secure the eternal blessedness of heaven. O the disappointment, and the ever-greatening misery, with which such shall finally wake up and find the harvest past, the summer ended, and they not saved! Child of pleasure, bethink thee of thy folly, and turn thee to thy call to the supper of salvation. God has a better portion for thee. His glorious banquet is spread, wherein he will recompense "an hundredfold now in this time" all thy losses and privations sustained for his sake, and in the world to come endow thee with immortal blessedness.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 15 : 1–10. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

THE Gospel for this morning brings to our notice, first of all, a very interesting historical circumstance. It is elsewhere said of our Saviour, that "the common people heard him gladly." An instance of this is here referred to, in which the populace streamed together to hear him, consisting largely of persons held in ill repute by the stricter religionists of the time. There was something in the discourses which he gave, which attracted men just in proportion as they felt their wretchedness, and awakened the most heartfelt interest even in

"publicans and sinners." As was sung by the prophet, the Spirit of God was upon Him to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Is. 61 : 1. And whilst the haughty Pharisees turned a deaf ear, and were offended at his condescending ways, the outcast and the despised, though laden with sins, and burdened with a sense of their crimes, detected in his utterances something which their souls craved, and pressed upon him with eager zeal to catch up the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

We have here also the encouraging fact, that he received them kindly, and did not disdain to communicate with them. His compassion was moved towards them, as he beheld them burdened and distressed, as sheep without a shepherd. He welcomed them to his presence, and to the benefits of his ministry, and freely bestowed upon them the consolations of his mercy. They were sick, and were conscious of their condition, and he showed his readiness to be to them their physician. He accepted their approaches, approved their penitent desires, and assured them of grace even for them. Though excluded from the congregation of Israel, there was place for them in his regard, and help for them from his overflowing goodness. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" but one "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Heb. 4 : 15;

5 : 2. Whatever may be the estate of men, his own gracious declaration is: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6 : 37.

But, in singular contrast with the exalted beneficence and condescension of the Saviour in this particular, the text also recounts an instance of most unreasonable narrowness and offence on the part of some from whom better things were to be expected. The very goodness of Christ is turned into an accusation against him. "The scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." In their haughtiness and prejudice, they thought it beneath the dignity of the Messiah for whom they were looking, thus benevolently to accept men of evil name, and to let himself down to familiar converse with those of ill repute.

Whether they were honest in thus construing the Saviour's conduct, or whether it was a mere breaking forth of malice in search for opportunity to accuse him, cannot be definitely decided from the account. Perhaps it did present to some what they were at a loss to reconcile with their conceptions of the Messiah, whilst to others it was a mere pretext with which to give a plausible coloring to their determined hatred and jealousy. At any rate, when persons are anxious to find fault with Christ, there is always plenty of opportunity to do it. Even the noblest of his deeds, if people wish to give themselves to it, are capable of a construction which will be food for malicious unbelief. If men are not willing to receive the truth,

there is ever at hand some plausible lie by which they may gratify their wicked wishes, and delude themselves to the rejection of the Saviour, and to their everlasting ruin.

But we have here also a brace of most precious parables, given by the Lord in vindication of his course, and in illustration of the whole economy of his interference for human salvation. It is to the purport of these parables that I invite your more particular attention. And may the Lord help us to conceive of them as their importance deserves.

I. Notice the picture they present of the original plan and estate of the universe.

I cannot at all agree that the ninety and nine unerring sheep—the "just persons who need no repentance"—contemplated in the first parable, or the nine unlost pieces of silver in the second, are meant to refer to the Scribes and Pharisees. These were murmurers, and hence hardly to be regarded as just ones. Just persons would not thus have accused and condemned the Just One. Nor were they of a class who needed no repentance. Jesus called them a generation of vipers, hypocrites, extortioners, whited sepulchres, children of hell, and declared to them that unless they repented they should all perish like those whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. They were wanderers from God and holiness as well as publicans and sinners. The guilt and wretchedness of the lost one consisted in its

having strayed away from the ninety and nine; but it certainly was no such crime and folly to separate from the godless Scribes and Pharisees. It is also implied in the remark appended to the parable, that there is joy in heaven over the ninety and nine just persons; but there was nothing in these Scribes and Pharisees thus to delight the heavenly worlds.

We must, therefore, go further back for the realization of the picture with which these parables start.

There was once a time when God was pleased with all that he had made, and when all his creatures were happy in him. The universe was once one blessed flock, with the Lord as their shepherd, all blessed in those sequestered realms which knew no blight or tumult of sinful disorder, and where everything was pervaded with innocence, tranquillity, and peace. A wilderness is not necessarily a desolate and empty place. Any wide, grassy plain, hidden away from the common world, and undisturbed in its quiet, would satisfy the scriptural use of the word. Such were the favorite pasture-grounds of the Orientals, and such was the universe of holy beings ere sin had made its disturbing inroads upon it. The starry plains were peopled only with unfallen creatures, secure, tranquil, and joyous in the smiles of their Maker. All rational beings were but one flock, and their shepherd was God. And the condition of man answered to this picture. He was as a new piece of silver, bright, precious, and bearing upon him

the image and superscription of the Almighty. There was no darkness in his understanding, no perverseness in his heart, no fears, no regrets, no sighs, no pains, no dimness.

II. But this beautiful scene was soon succeeded by another. A cloud arose upon the sweet morning of our world. One of the happy flock disappeared from its fellowship with its comrades. It was lost; wide-wandering from the Lord, in a world that smoked with curses and wretchedness. Man had fallen. The heavenward look had departed from his eye, the nobleness of his nature had faded, and fear, danger, and sorrow had become his portion. He had given himself to folly and sin, and misery and death had become his inheritance. Precious coin from the mint of heaven, and made to be kept near the person of God, he had disappeared from his place, and the beautiful image he once bore had become worn, wasted, and covered with rust and dirt. He was now a bewildered wanderer, and as incapable of self-help as a piece of silver dropped among rubbish. He was still a sheep; but a lost, torn, and distressed one, with nothing to expect but a miserable end. He was still silver, and having some traces of the original image, but corroded, obscured, and lost in dust and darkness. He needed now that his Shepherd should go to seek and rescue him, if ever he was to be saved. A new order of things needed to be instituted to bring him back. A candle had to be lighted; a sweeping of judgment

had to be done; a stretching forth of the Divine hand was required, in order to restore the lost piece to the treasure-house of the holy and the good.

III. Notice, then, the movements of Divine compassion for the recovery of the lost. There was but one of a hundred gone. Ninety and nine remained. But precious in the eye of God is even one soul. It is a jewel capable of adding to the glory and grandeur of heaven. It is a radiant and living offshoot of Deity, capacitated to live and shine though stars should languish and expire. Though abused, prostituted, starved, and ruined by sin, it may still be made a part of the immortal intellect, heart and life of the universe. And its calamities are not of such a sort but that infinite wisdom and goodness has resources by which God can be just, and yet receive it again into his favor, the more interesting forever because of this disaster. A plan of operation for its recovery has accordingly been instituted. And wonderful are the steps of the heavenly expedient.

The Shepherd himself goes after the lost sheep. He does not merely send servants to find it. He comes himself. In this going forth is involved the incarnation and earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his whole providence in the Church and through his word and sacraments. Leaving the ninety and nine in their accustomed pasturage, he betakes himself to the region and estate of the missing one. He is not discouraged by the great-

ness of the way, nor by the risks and privations of the undertaking. And having taken upon him all the humiliation and pain of the enterprise, he has never ceased in his efforts to discover, win, and restore the lost one. As the language of the parable is, "He went after that which was lost until he found it." The death-darkness did not deter him, nor the guilt-burden overcome his resolution. Often faint and weary, even unto death, he did not give over the pursuit. How great was his agony in the garden! How unspeakable his anguish on Calvary! But he cheerfully and patiently endured it all. He came to seek his own, and he pursued his object to its consummation.

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulder rejoicing." There is a heavenly sweetness in this picture. Gently and graciously does the Saviour deal with perishing souls. The Shepherd does not chide and threaten the weary wanderer. He does not treat it with harshness, or seek to drive it back with increased terrors. He approaches it with the utmost kindness. He woos it with loving gentleness. He calls it to him. He takes it in his arms. He helps it in its weakness. He lays it on his own shoulders. He puts himself between it and further laceration and danger. He joyfully bears it towards its proper home and blessedness. Oh, the loving-kindness of our blessed Saviour! We are guilty; yet he comes to us, not as a wrathful avenger, but as a sympathizing friend. His highest pleasure is to help us in our weakness and distress. He comes

to us and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And all his Divine almightiness is freely vouchsafed to bring us joyously home.

Or, to use the other figure, he lighteth a candle and personally searches every dark corner that he may come upon the lost piece which cannot help itself. This candle is the illuminating Word, which he causeth to shine around and upon us; and the sweeping which he does is the stir of his providence and Spirit, moving to touch the hearts of the unfortunate lost. In Paradise already this candle was lit, when God gave promise of a coming Saviour; and all through and in his Church, in every age, this sweeping has been going on, and always for the finding of souls, and the bringing of them to light and salvation. As the eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, taketh them, beareth them upon her wings, so the Lord dealeth with us to bring us up to the glorious life of heaven. With a thousand influences he plies men. He sends them the word of his Gospel. He stirs about their dark resting-places. He disturbs their guilty repose. He deprives them of their impure attachments. He makes them realize the evil and bitterness of departing from God. He takes hold upon them by the powers of his grace. He taketh up every willing one, to strengthen him with his help, and to beautify him with the sanctification of his Spirit. And all this is signified to us by what the Shepherd does for the recovery of the lost sheep, and in

what the woman does for the recovery of her lost piece of silver.

IV. Notice also the result. The lost sheep is restored. The piece of silver is recovered. Or, exchanging the imagery of the parables for literal terms, the sinner is completely changed—returned from his alienated and lost condition—made a true penitent. This is the direct object of all the arrangements and ministrations of grace. The wonderful incarnation of Christ, and all his wonderful doings and sufferings in the flesh, and the whole economy of agencies, and providences, and appointments by which he still continues to approach and ply men, look to this one end. God is not willing that sinners should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And when all his great work has its designed effect, and the purpose of all his pains and grace is reached, and the fruit of his astonishing endeavors appears, the whole is described in a single word—the sinner repentant.

People often conceive very unworthily of repentance. They do not take in the scope and significance of the inward change and entire revolution which this word covers. It is not mere sorrow for sin; nor yet mere reformation of life. It includes these, but it is something deeper and greater than both combined. It is the whole man recovered from his sinfulness to the fold and service of God. It is a change of mind, and heart, and life, wrought by the Spirit and grace of God, restoring him from his follies, his darkness, his

wrong attachments, his selfishness, and the bringing of him to see the goodness and grace of God, and to give his whole heart to love and serve God. It is a transformation of character, wrought by celestial power, through the means of grace, by which new views, new aims, new feelings, new desires, and a new method of life are begotten in him, conforming to God, and the likeness of heavenly orders, and connecting him again with the society and fellowship of the unfallen and the pure. This is the picture which the text contemplates, and the Saviour describes, as the result of his movements in behalf of the lost. And wherever a man is awakened to a sense of his fallen estate, and learns to believe and trust that Jesus came to seek and to save him, and closes in with the offers of Divine mercy, and gives himself wholly to the Lord to be his obedient child and servant; there the proper fruit of the Gospel exists, and there we behold a true penitent.

V. And wherever this occurs there is joy. It is the end of gracious interference achieved. It is the fruit of the travail of the Saviour's soul realized. It is the aim of God's most wonderful works accomplished. And everything is full of gladness. The Shepherd rejoices because his lost sheep is recovered. The woman rejoices because her lost coin is found. And others rejoice in sympathy. The language is singularly comprehensive.

"There is joy in heaven;" and the implication

is that it is joy throughout heaven, from centre to circumference—joy on the throne, and joy in those who serve under it—joy in the heart of God, and among all the hosts of God—joy for Christ's sake, for the penitent's sake, for heaven's sake—joy that a broken link has been repaired in the holy creation of God—joy that another precious jewel has been added to the crown of redeeming love—joy that there is born another tenant for the mansions of glory—joy that another symptom has transpired of the ultimate recovery of all the downtrodden fields of creation, which sin has overrun. Not only joy, but "more joy" than over the whole unfallen flock besides. The sickliest member of the household always has the greatest sympathy, and excites the greatest interest. He who has run the greatest risks and yet escaped, always attracts the most regard. It is not that the mother is without affection for her family at home that her thoughts leave them when the storm is abroad, and go out after her sailor boy exposed to the perils of the deep. And it is not that the shepherd cares not for the rest of the flock that he is so thrilled with delight at the recovery of the one that was lost. But there is something in the perils and achievements of redemption which adds new emotions to the universe, and raises its blessedness higher than if sin had never been.

Behold, then, in this sketch, a triumphant vindication of that part of the Saviour's conduct to which the murmuring scribes and Pharisees ob-

jected. They complained that he received sinners and allowed himself to be received by them. It was the truth they uttered. But what they meant for condemnation was his highest praise. It was the object for which he came into the world. It was the deepest purpose of his Messiahship. It was the joy of heaven itself. And it was in entire harmony with the ordinary principles of action which govern in the affairs of men. Why should he be blamed for what was so thoroughly good? Alas for the blindness of men, that the Saviour's sublimest excellencies should be brought forward for his accusation!

Behold, also, the encouragement we have to confide in Christ. Our consciences accuse us of many shortcomings, wrongs, and sins. But this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. He does not make common cause with their impieties, but it is his chief joy to welcome them to his forgiveness and favors, if they are only willing to hear his voice and come to him. Many are afraid to think that Christ can be gracious to such as they. But let all such be encouraged to dismiss their fears, and learn to believe how merciful and condescending he is. It is his joy to save whosoever is willing to be saved. And we do him injustice and dishonor by doubting his willingness and delight to take us into his favor, and to make us partakers of his everlasting glory.

Behold, finally, what is the sublimest work of sinful men. It is to repent. It is to open our eyes to the folly and wickedness of departure from

the living God, and our hearts to the gracious approaches of the Good Shepherd, who giveth his life for us. It is to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and to be reconciled to God, who is rightfully entitled to our obedience and love. An unconverted man is a sad object to the contemplation of heavenly orders. They look upon him with melancholy wonder. Oh, that he were wise, that he understood this, that he might turn himself unto the Lord, who hath done so much to save him! This is their feeling. And nothing can occur on earth so delightful to their sight, or so full of thrilling joy to their hearts as when the sinner softens to the call of Jesus, and yieldeth his heart to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. It is more to them than the birth of empires. And it is a greater achievement for him than to attain a Cæsar's dominion.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 6 : 36–42. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch ?

The disciple is not above his master : but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

THESE are the concluding words of our Saviour's great Sermon on the Mount. We cannot now enter upon all the rich truths that present themselves. The whole spirit of our holy religion, particularly as it respects our temper and practice, is here brought forward. That spirit is the spirit of charity. Whatever else a man may have if he have not charity, he is become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. This is the teaching of the Saviour in the text, as well as of Paul in his Epistle. And in proportion as we would be Christians, it is required of us to be charitable.

The passage before us may readily be divided into several distinct words, each descriptive of the heavenly mind, to which it may be well for us to refer separately.

First Word: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

This gives us both a precept and a pattern. The precept is, to be merciful, and the pattern is, as your Father also is merciful.

To be merciful, is to be compassionate, tender, disposed to pity the erring and the unfortunate, and considerate of the comfort and well-being of our fellow-creatures, even if they do not deserve it. The merciful man is kind, and commiserates even the guilty. Such also is the pattern which God has set us. He is pitiful and compassionate, slow to anger, and not willing that any should perish. Though men offend him often and grievously, and wrong him beyond measure, and deserve his wrath, he is very slow to inflict it, or to visit our sins upon us. Though he often causes pain, yet it is remedial in its intention, and meant to recover, and not ruin us. He pities his creatures, and is merciful towards them, and has even given his only Son to suffering and death in order to save the guilty and to restore them to their proper being and happiness. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He gives, and he forgives. He tenderly considers all our need of body and soul, and he is ever at work for the good of both. He heareth the young

ravens cry, and provides for the young lions that suffer hunger. And in this compassionate regard for all creatures, and especially for poor fallen man, he is our pattern. We are to be merciful as he also is merciful.

Perverted human nature is quite otherwise disposed. There is much generous and kind feeling in the world; but there is more of a contrary sort. Man's regard for man, apart from selfish interests, is not very great. There is not much real and abiding sympathy. Cold, and easily disturbed are even the warmest friendships of earth. One word often serves to dissolve what it has required years to form. There is a vast deal of severity in man. He is full of vindictiveness. It is an easy thing to incur his displeasure, but not so easy to secure his forgiveness and enlist his kindness. Few are able to pass by a fault, or to forget an injury, or to show tenderness toward offenders. Even toward the lower creatures, there is a harshness and lack of feeling which is often very unmerciful. Though earth and her millioned tribes suffer for man's sake, there is great lack of pity for them, and often unprovoked additions to their galling bondage. Cruelty is rife in all quarters, and the more aggravated and repulsive from the helpless muteness which nature has imposed upon brute beings. "The dog cannot plead his own right, nor render a reason for exemption, nor give a soft answer unto wrath to turn aside the undeserved lash. The galled ox cannot complain, nor supplicate a moment's respite. The spent horse

hideth his distress till he panteth out his spirit at the goal; and in the winter of his life, when worn by constant toil, if ingratitude forget his services, he cannot bring them to remembrance." But Jesus pities even the dumb animals, and commands us to be merciful to them, as our Father in heaven is merciful to them.

It is not always easy to exercise a merciful and compassionate spirit. Disordered nature is so severe and ugly, that it is hard to bring these evil hearts to tenderness. But, in proportion to the difficulty, is the excellence of the achievement. "Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city." He is a greater conqueror, and does a nobler work.

> "The greatest attribute of heaven is mercy;
> And 'tis the crown of justice, and the glory,
> Where it may kill with right, to save with pity."

SECOND WORD: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

Injuries, censures, contumelies, and indignities, we are not to insist on having resented. We are not to avenge ourselves, but rather return good for evil, and seek to overcome evil by the leniency and charity which we show to those who do us wrong. We are not to follow the way of the world; for that would be the blind leading the blind, which must end in both falling into the ditch. If any are so shortsighted and perverse as to render us reproach for kindness, evil for good-

will, or injury for our interest in their welfare; we are not to be dismayed on account of it, but let it pass, and forgive the wrong. It was thus that the Saviour himself dealt with his enemies, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.

And that we thus forgive others, is a condition of being forgiven ourselves. This is the great motive to forbearance. The petition which the Saviour has put upon our lips wherewith to approach our Maker's throne is, "Forgive us, as we forgive those who trespass against us." And if we are not willing to forgive, the prayer is that we may never be forgiven. But, if we are forgiving, so shall we also be forgiven. Showing ourselves friendly and merciful to offenders on earth, we shall make to ourselves friends in heaven, and experience also the clemency of our God in Christ Jesus. There is no forgiveness for those who never forgive.

It is also the way to make the most happiness out of this present life. Pride, anger, and strained severity, are thorns that prick and trouble those who nurse them. They alienate men only the more, and beget a restless uneasiness which robs of peace. The happiest soul, is the meek and gentle soul. Having peace within, he feels not the purturbations without. There is a dignity and a composure in a forbearing and forgiving spirit, which sets at nought the assaults and wrongs that are made upon it. Like the stars, it abides in peace notwithstanding the tempests and clouds

which dash about beneath. It is after all *the meek* who really inherit the earth.

THIRD WORD: "Give, and it shall be given unto you. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

This is a necessitous life. All men are dependent one upon another. And God has so constituted things that the lack of one is to be relieved by the abundance of the other. It therefore becomes necessary, and a very important element of Christian duty, to part with portions of what we possess for the purpose of ministering to those who have not.

The world is full of pressing needs, both bodily and spiritual. There are hungry ones to feed, and naked ones to clothe, and sick ones to visit, and disabled ones to help, and fatherless ones to protect, and ignorant ones to instruct, and fallen ones to lift up, and erring ones to recover to right, and benighted ones to bring to the light, and all sorts of suffering ones who are to be relieved; and all by the beneficence of those who have been the more fortunate.

It is surprising also to find how much is said in holy Scripture about the duty, honor, and blessedness of proper giving. God, and angels, and all parts of the creation in its undamaged constitution, are great *givers*. And so, as men are recovered again to their proper relations to God in Christ Jesus, it belongs also to them to be willing and cheerful givers of whatsoever they possess,

that may contribute to the diminution of misery and the relief of those who have need. Hence, the admonitions: "To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate."

And just in proportion as men fulfil this law, will be the measure of their own prosperity and blessedness. "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." "For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

FOURTH WORD: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye."

A censorious spirit is not the spirit of Christ. True charity is more concerned to be right itself than to be perpetually carping at the defects of others. It is a very common thing for people to get into the way of judging and fault-finding, not considering that their zeal to set others right would be much better employed upon themselves. There

is a spurious zeal—a species of spiritual cannibalism—which fattens on the flesh of its fellows, and loves to feed on others' failings; a spirit which is ever on the lookout for people's faults, and is never slow to speak of them and to magnify them. There are some who are never satisfied, never pleased, and with whom it seems impossible to say, or patiently to hear, anything good or praiseworthy of any one but themselves. They are everlastingly perceiving motes in the eyes of their brethren, not at all conscious that they have beams sticking in their own. But true charity is of a different temper. All such zeal Christ pronounces *hypocrisy*. We are to exercise our powers upon ourselves, to find out and correct our own faults, rather than to be such swift judges of others. There is no one so bad but there are some good qualities in him; and there is no one so perfect that he is quite free from faults and imperfections. True piety remembers its own shortcomings and defects; it considers itself, and is most of all concerned about its own standing before God, and so is prepared to deal with meekness toward others. If we were to estimate the rosebush only according to its thorns we would at once condemn it to the flames. But this would be a most unfair way of judging it. When we look at the delightful flower which it bears, we are quite ready to put up with the thorns, and rejoice in its most careful culture, that our senses may feast upon its sweetness. We must be just. We must have an eye to the good. We must be willing to give honor

to whom honor is due, whatever may be the little defects and drawbacks that might be pointed out.

Nor is it at all to be taken as an evidence of superior worth or holiness when men are so facile in discovering flaws in others, and are so very zealous in the censure and condemnation of their brethren. There are spots even upon the face of the sun, but still it is the most glorious object we know of in God's glorious creation, and without it our whole planetary system would instantly wreck. We are not, therefore, to be occupying ourselves to extract motes from the eyes of others, but rather to give diligence to correct our own faults, and to see to it that we do not have beams in our own eyes. We are not to take it for granted that all is right with us because we can detect errors and defects in others. And the word of Christ is, that we should search and prove ourselves first, and make sure that we are perfect, before we set ourselves up as judges of other people. This is the fruit that grows on a good tree; and if this be not the product of our piety it is not yet of the right sort.

The Fifth Word involves the whole subject of right building for eternity. The mere profession of religion is not enough. It is necessary, but it is not all. It is of no use to call Christ Lord, Lord, if we do not the things which he says. Judas knew him, and approached him with "Hail, Master!" and a kiss; and yet treason was in his heart, and all was in the devil's service. Nominal

Christianity is of but little worth, if it goes no deeper than name and profession. Unbelieving self-righteousness will not avail, even though it should clothe itself in all the fair show of great devotion. The Pharisees claimed much for themselves, and professed great holiness, but they were an evil generation, and crucified the Lord of glory.

The true way to safety is plainly indicated. We are to call Christ Lord, and we are to conduct ourselves accordingly; that is, *do the things which he says.* We must come to him as our Lord and Saviour, hear his sayings, and do them. All that the Father giveth to him come unto him; and the reason why so many perish, is that they will not come unto him that they might have life. All true saints hear Christ's sayings. They incline their ear, and come, and hear, that their souls may live. He is their prophet, him they consult, and they take the word from his lips, and learn from him. And what they learn they put to practice. They hear his sayings, and they *do them.* They carry out in life and conduct what he teaches, and what his word enjoins, humbly trusting in him alone. Such is the word before us; and this the Saviour calls *building* a house which shall stand the storms of trial—a safe building for eternity.

All men are builders. Every one is building in one way or another. Some are building enduring mansions, in the way just stated, and others are building houses on the sand, which the day of trial will utterly sweep away. Some, by true faith in Christ, are building for eternal blessed-

ness, and others are building according to their own fancies and conceits — building upon the earth—who shall never have any good of their misdirected toil.

"He builds too low who builds beneath the skies." The true foundation is Christ. He is the abiding rock. He who builds on him builds on a solid and unfailing basis. But he who builds on anything else builds for destruction to sweep away.

The word, on this point, is plain and unmistakable. "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that, without a foundation, built an house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

The true rock is Jesus Christ. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On this Rock, therefore, we are to build, or we build to no purpose. Only he that builds on this Rock shall never be ashamed.

But it is likewise important that we have re-

spect to the superstructure also. Though we have the right foundation, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire." "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones," that is, whatsoever is in thorough accord with the will and Word of God, his work shall abide, and "he shall receive a reward." But, if any one build upon this foundation "wood, hay, stubble;" that is, according to his own will and conceits, that man's work shall be burnt, and he shall suffer loss. Hence the necessity of the utmost care; to give earnest heed to the Saviour's word; making sure that we have the true foundation, and then diligently building upon it "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." For only thus shall an entrance be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Only thus shall we exhibit a true heavenly mind.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 5: 1–11. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.

And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

CHRIST was the most indefatigable of preachers. From the beginning of his ministry to the end of it, he labored incessantly, in the synagogues, in the streets, in the cities, in the country, on the mountain sides, and by the sea; wherever he could find listening ears and attentive hearts.

Nor was he without marked success. He arrested attention. Though many disbelieved and

reviled, "the common people heard him gladly," and the throngs pressed around him by thousands, eager "to hear the word of God." And what, indeed, should men be more anxious to hear than the voice and word of their Maker.

Nor did ever a soul draw near, hungering or thirsting for the word of direction, comfort, and life, but that word was given. Sometimes it was given in ordinary modes of speech, sometimes by miracles, and sometimes by both combined. This last was the method in the instance now before us. Exactly what he *spoke*, is not told; but what he *did*, is fully written for our learning, and stands out as the great sermon of the occasion.

It is not simply as a work of wonder that this miracle has been recorded. It, indeed, attests the divine power and mission of Christ; but it is more than a seal to his commission. It is itself part of the writing, fraught with holy doctrine, and radiant with heavenly truth.

There are two relations in which we may consider it, in both of which it constitutes an impressive discourse, set out in a parable of external facts. We may view it as *A picture of earthly life*, and as *A parable of the ministerial work*. I propose to glance at it in both these aspects, praying God to conduct us into the real truth of His holy word.

I. As a Picture of Earthly Life.

The miracle itself was wrought upon the sea; and all concerned were, at the time, on the sea. This was the little inland sea of Galilee, here

called, "the lake of Gennesaret." That sea is a symbol of our earthly existence. It is a small sea, hemmed in between the hills, and requiring no long time to pass over it. It is islandless. Having once started upon it, there is no stopping-place till we come to the shore. It is full of fishes, of many varieties. Most of the apostles were accustomed to fish up their living from it. They found in it much to enrich, satisfy, and bless. So with our earthly life. It is limited and brief. We soon pass over it, even when it is most extended. Once entered upon, there is no halt till we reach the further shore. Yet, it has much good in it. Much can be made out of it, if properly used—much to enrich and bless, both for time and eternity.

On this sea certain fisherman had toiled the whole night long, and taken nothing. When Christ came to them, they were leaving their boats, and washing their nets, disheartened and sad at their ill success. It is the picture of human life without Christ. Good was there, as the miracle proved; but they had not the skill to find or inclose it. No labors or wisdom of man, apart from the Saviour, can ever result any otherwise than as Simon here confessed: "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." We may accumulate wealth, we may make ourselves a name, we may create many a commotion among our fellow-men; but, when we come to the shore, if without Christ and his word, we will have only empty boats and dirty nets. Life has treasures

and blessed opportunities; but mere earthly skill and industry can make nothing out of it for eternity.

But Christ comes down to this little sea. His voice reverberates along its shores. He approaches these toilworn and disheartened fishermen, enters into their boats, tells of the blessed things of the Father in heaven, and proposes a new and fresh adventure on those waters. This pictures Christian life, or life with Christ.

Here, however, the Lord himself takes the command. Simon was a skilled fisherman, and familiar with this sea; but Simon's judgment is quite superseded. Jesus gives the order, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." To the wisdom of man, this was a foolish direction. It was now bright daylight, and hence an unfavorable time for fishing; and not the deep water, but the shoals, were the approved places for success. Having failed in the night-time and in the shallows, what was to be hoped when the sunshine had put the game on the alert, and the deep waters were to be traversed? But such was the command against all Simon's science. And so it is ever in the things of Christ. All the knowledge and wisdom of the wise amounts to nothing here. If any man thinketh himself to be wise, he must become a fool, that he may be wise. The wisdom of this world is only foolishness with God, and cannot help a particle toward the true and proper treasures of our existence.

The natural heart is ever full of questionings and objections to the directions and commands of Jesus. It perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can it know them, for they are spiritually discerned. What is there in so trifling an ordinance as preaching? What virtue in this church-going, and psalm-singing, and praying? What worth can there be in so insignificant a matter as a little water put upon babes? And what benefit in gathering round the chancel to receive a bit of bread and a sip of wine? All this is mere foolishness to the proud but faulty reason of earth. Nevertheless, so has Christ commanded; and with all our misgivings, our business is to submit and obey as Simon did, because such is the word of the Master. Only let it be once ascertained that so the great Teacher has directed, and there remains nothing for us but to obey. It is this questioning of the Saviour's capacity, this hesitation to believe that he knows what he is about, which occasions so much unsuccess and failure in the world. People know what is commanded, but they cannot see the use of it; and because they cannot understand it, and their own thinking in the case is not met, they do not obey, and are not profited.

True faith puts aside all mere natural reasonings, and obeys in spite of them. If there are doctrines which it cannot fathom or understand, it takes them nevertheless, and holds them steadfastly, simply and alone on Christ's word. If there are sacraments and ceremonies which appear use-

less, it does not hold back from them on that account, but devoutly observes them, for the simple reason that Jesus has ordained them. If there are labors to be undertaken and sacrifices to be made, the value or reason of which it cannot just exactly comprehend, it is still willing to venture and endure in honor of him whose word so directs, and whose providence so appoints. Its motto ever is: "*At thy word I will.*" And it is only when the soul comes to the point of such a surrender and obedience, that the grand miracle of blessing is about to be realized.

These fishermen were commanded to let down their nets for a draught. He who caused the fishes to be inclosed in such abundance, might also have caused them to leap into the boats. But that was not his method. Means had to be used. The thing was a great miracle, but it was not wrought apart from human agency and implements. The fishermen had to exert themselves the same as on other occasions. They had to use their boats, their nets, and their hands. If they had failed in this, they would have taken no fishes. Grace does not exempt from toil, or from the use of such means and powers as we already possess. It is not our working that gives the result; but that result does not come without our working. It is not the method of grace to nullify nature, or to dispense with its functions and activities, but to apply them in new directions, to subordinate them to new commands. Christianity does not unmake man, or dispense with the ordi-

nary boats, nets, and appliances of life. It simply puts a new wisdom in command of them, and subordinates them to new ways and directions. Nature has given us ears to hear, and hands to work, and implements to use, and wills to act; and we cannot dispense with the employment of them. The only change of them under Christ is the starting of them upon a new expedition, to other waters, in obedience to a new and higher leadership.

"And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes." Life under Christ may seem very foolish and unprofitable. There is much to be done and suffered which seems only loss and waste of energy. But Christian obedience is never without its reward. It extracts a richness of good out of this little sea of human life, which could not be found at all by the skill and toil of unaided human nature. Even the most adverse things on earth work together for good to them that love God. They may seem to lose, but their very losses are gains. They may suffer great anxieties from their breaking nets and sinking ships, and have to labor the harder under their new Commander, but it is only because of the superior weight of good on which they have lain hold, and the very multitudinousness of the blessing which they are bringing with them to the heavenly shore.

Peter was astounded at the draught of the fishes which they had taken, and so were all who were with him, and likewise James and John, his part-

ners, in the other ship. It was a wonder to them that, at such a time, and in such water, they should take anything at all; and now that such innumerable quantities came up, they were completely overwhelmed. The human understanding cannot take in, nor earthly nets or vessels hold, all the treasures of reward and riches inclosed by a life of obedience to Jesus. And when we come to survey them in all their plenitude, we will be like the Queen of Sheba when she beheld the glory of Solomon, overcome with the transcendent magnificence, and obliged to confess that the half had not been told us. Confounded with wonder, distracted with amazement, deluged in blessedness, bursting with joy at the munificence, goodness, wisdom, grace, and power of Jesus, shall be our hearts, when once we come to the eternal shores, and leisurely con over what he has given us.

But look at the case in another application,—

II. As a Parable of the Ministerial Work.

If this miracle was not a part of the call, it was at least a part of the confirmation of Peter and his partners as ministers and apostles of Jesus Christ. The word to the trembling and astounded Simon was, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." The Saviour thus identifies this exploit as a parabolic picture of the subsequent work of these men.

In this view, the sea becomes a symbol of this

world, and the fishes, of men living in the world. The sea of Galilee is low down in the earth, and of no great dimensions. Such is our world to the general universe in the midst of which it is placed. This is true both physically and morally. And yet Christ came to this low and humble lake, and wrought wonders in and around it, as he never came or wrought at any other sea.

The sea of Galilee is a variable and often turbulent water, subject to many sudden changes and dangerous storms. More than once was this illustrated in the Saviour's history. So this world.

But in this world-sea are multitudes of fishes—a vast and varied population of human beings, spending their existence as impulse or appetite for the moment impels them, knowing nothing but their own pleasures, passions, and immediate wants, governed by no law, under no restraint, and unbounded in voracity and selfishness. Brought to shore, they are a precious treasure; but lost and useless in their muddy homes, where filth gathers and nothing but greed and passion reigns.

The office of the ministry is for the inclosing of these human fishes, the drawing of them out of their haunts of sin and degradation to the shores of blessedness and glory, and the presentation of them before the Lord as his very joy and treasure.

Like the fishing of the text, it is an office and agency appointed and directed by Christ himself, the great Master-fisher. In all its features and departments, it is from God. "He that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all

things, gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. 4 : 10–12.

It is a human agency. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Cor. 4 : 7. Angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to the heirs of salvation, but the ministry which makes heirs of salvation is in *human* hands. It was Peter and his comrades that did this fishing, not Gabriel and his hosts, nor yet the crowd upon the shore.

Not all are apostles, and not every man is a preacher; but only such as Christ elects, authorizes, and sends as his ambassadors and instruments to catch and save men. This is the more to be noted as there is a constant tendency to break in upon the divine order in this particular. Every now and then, and in our day especially, there is a creeping of the idea into the minds of men that this is not quite the thing for the times, and a well-meaning but mistaken restlessness arises to slip in some human invention or other to help out God's appointed order. The people on the shore are not always content that the nets should be cast only by the Peters, Jameses, and Johns whom the Saviour calls and commissions for the work. The thing is too slow, too formal, too inefficient, too constraining. Why should not every Christian be allowed to preach? Why should not these many intelligent laymen and gifted women be utilized for the business? May they not reach

the masses more readily than the regular church and ministry? Even clergymen have caught this fever, and set themselves to raise up and organize bodies of "lay preachers," proposing to do the ministerial work better by unministerial men. Brotherhoods and societies have sprung up, baptizing themselves with the name of Christ, which cry out against the "one man ministry," and virtually abolish the pastoral office which God has ordained, thinking to improve on God's arrangements. He that desireth to share in this work verily desireth a good thing. Would to God that hundreds and thousands more of our young men, and older men too, would offer themselves to take part in this great and momentous fishing! But if they would be ministers, let them become such in the regular way, put themselves under the attendant responsibilities, and enter by the door into the sheepfold; for he that climbeth up some other way the Saviour denounces as a thief and a robber, because he steals an office which does not belong to him. If men would do Christ's fishing, let them keep to Christ's regulations, and honor his appointments. These new carts for carrying God's ark, which men substitute for the priests' shoulders, much as they relieve the priests, are heathen inventions, and bring no good to Israel. And though these shoremen now and then bring up a fish or two, and their expedients sometimes promise great things, if the picture before us may be trusted, Christ is not with them; and the churches which yield to these novelties will find to their sorrow

how fearfully they have erred. Our explicit doctrine is, and it is the doctrine of God's word, "that no man should publicly in the Church teach or administer the sacraments, except he be rightly called;" and no man is rightly called whom the Church, as such, has not regularly authorized and sent, as Christ sent these fishermen. Uzzah also once thought he saw the ark of the Lord in need of help, and very piously put forth his hand to steady it; but it was not for unconsecrated hands thus to touch holy things, and God struck him for his error, and he perished on the spot. And our modern Uzzahs, male and female, in their mistaken zeal to grasp functions which belong not to them, are certainly preparing for themselves an equally fatal resentment from the very God whom they think to befriend by their presumption. We would not keep Christians from work; God forbid. Every man, woman, and child in the Church is part of the Divine organism for bringing souls into the gospel ship, and needs to use every power to that end; but each in his and her proper sphere and place, and not by depreciating God's ordained ministry, or by seizing upon functions which have never been committed to them.

Peter was directed to "launch out into the deep." This also was a significant part of the transaction. It sets forth the policy that is to govern in this work of catching men. The apostles well understood it. They did not waste their time with the small places, little communities, and worn-out localities of Palestine. Having fulfilled their

Master's word to begin at Jerusalem, they soon put forth into the broad world, and pressed for the great centres of influence and population. It is not long before we find Peter in Antioch and Babylon, John in Ephesus, Andrew in Scythia, Philip in Hieropolis, Bartholomew in Arminia, Thomas in India, Matthew in Ethiopia, Simon in Egypt, Lebbæus in Persia, and Paul splashing the gospel net into every great city "from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum." The Church needs to exercise foresight and adventure, and it is the business of its leaders to launch out into the deep waters.

Luther understood it, and did not hesitate to imperil states, disturb empires, and agitate the world for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, and the winning of men from the darkness of superstition and the thraldom of blasphemous and oppressive usurpation.

And the danger is constant that Christians will content themselves in timidly fishing along the shores, by the old homesteads, in the shoal waters, when the command is to "launch out into the deep." Christ calls for large ideas, bold enterprise, heavy undertakings, brave adventure, and heroic plunging into the thick of things, where the fathom-line needs time to find the bottom. One reason why the Church does not accomplish more is because she does not attempt more. People are afraid, and hesitate, and think less will do, or, like Peter, are wise over against the Lord's commands, disabling both themselves and the

grace of God. This is especially true in Church matters. In other things they are bold and adventurous enough. They are ready to undertake the most massive enterprises, stake their fortunes on the wildest schemes, give their money by the most unstinted freeness, determine to put through the most difficult experiments, and work with Titanic energy at what had as well be let alone. But when it comes to launching out beyond their mother shores for the Gospel of Christ, they shake their heads, and do not know about it, and are not prepared either with money or with work. When incense is to be burned to national vanity, or the rites and ceremonies of a fantastic "order" are to be accommodated, the grander the expenditure, the more enthusiastic the zeal; and Christian men are ready with their thousands upon thousands, and feel happy to give them. But when the cause of their redemption calls for their help, and the holy Gospel on which alone they, or their friends and children, can ever have good hope of heaven, appeals to them, and the saving appointments of God are to be put in place as becomes them, though the command of their Lord and judge is to "launch out," these same men's hearts are as cold and tight as stones frozen in the earth, and their hands as hard to open as if belonging to dried mummies of thirty centuries ago! Is this the way Christ would have his commands treated? No wonder that so little is effected. More liberal things must be devised, and larger ideas must possess our hearts. To catch the fish we must go

where they are, launch out into the deep, breast the waves undaunted, put our hands to the oars for heavy pulls, and never weary till the right points are reached, and the nets are sifting through the waters whither Christ directs. The cause needs this, and the Saviour requires it.

"And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes." Christian effort, directed as Christ commands, will always succeed. God's own promise is, that his word shall not return unto him void, but accomplish his pleasure, and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it. Is. 55 : 11. Launching out where the fish are, we shall inclose them, and in numbers, too, beyond all thought. Peter expected nothing; but acting in obedience to the Master's command, the success was beyond all that he had ever seen or ever dreamed.

Yet, with the mighty draught, there came new troubles. "Their net brake;" their boats began to sink. It is a picture of the rents, and schisms, and constant tendencies to deterioration, which mark the visible Church on earth. The nets are all the time breaking, and the boats on the point of sinking. It is a trying thing that it is so; but we cannot help it. Men will differ and rend things. There was a breakage of this sort even between Paul and Barnabas. And sometimes the most preciously freighted undertakings are on the very point of being swamped by these partings of the cords that will not hold together. Indeed, it seems to be the fixed plan and purpose of God to

keep things in his Church in just such a condition as to give the intensest anxieties, to try our faith and call forth the greater exertions. The nets yield and tear just when it is most important they should hold firm, and the boats begin to dip and ship the sea just when we can least afford to have them go under, all that we may work the harder and watch the closer. Such occurrences at such times seem specially vexatious and deplorable; but it will not do to surrender because of them. We cannot stop to mend the net when it is full, nor give up to make for the shore with our work unfinished. The net, after all, does not so break as to lose the fishes, and the ships cannot sink while Christ is in them. We must still work on, and continue to load in, trusting to Him who has given the commands.

People are ever crying out, "Ah, the net is broken! Christians are hopelessly divided! Protestantism is a failure! You'll never reach the masses till you change your base!" Be it so; Peter was not sent to catch all the fish in the sea. And, with all the breakage, the fish are being brought in, and the boats are filling with them. And again the cry is, "Your boat is sinking! You have miscalculated your strength! You have undertaken more than you can get through with! Your ideas are too big for your means!" Be it so; Christ is in the ship, and we had better go to the bottom with him than to get to shore without him. The tearing of the net did not prevent the getting in of the fishes, and the dipping of the

boats did not hinder the secure landing of the precious freight. Better, like Peter, fall down at the feet of Jesus, and confess what sinners we are for doubting him or his commands or plans. He knows what he is about, why he lets the net break, and the boats ship the sea; and our alarms and timidities are the fruits of our own unbelief and folly, and not of any real deficiency in His arrangements.

After this miraculous draught Peter and his comrades "forsook all and followed him." It cured their doubts. It showed them how wise and worthy of their confidence the blessed Saviour was. And the same should it do for us. Though all our thinking be set aside, and the nets break in our hands, and the boats threaten to sink under us, if we are only sure that we have his command, and will, and presence, it is enough.

Lord, we have wandered forth through doubt and sorrow,
  And Thou hast made each step an onward one;
And we will ever trust each unknown morrow, —
  Thou wilt sustain us till its work is done.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW 5 : 20. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

FROM the time of the great captivity in Babylon onward, Judaism was represented by the Scribes and Pharisees. They were the pulsating heart of the Hebrew nationality from the fall of the ancient monarchy to the final destruction of Jerusalem. In dealing with them we deal with the very chiefs of the nation and its religion.

The Scribes were an educated professional class, whose particular business it was to copy, interpret, and teach the law. They originated during the long servitude in Babylon. Ezra himself was the head of a class of this kind. If any one wished a copy of the sacred books, or an authorized explanation of any point of law or duty, the application had to be made to the Scribes; and what they gave out was accepted as the authentic word and teaching of God. They read the law to the people in the synagogues, propounded the inculcations of the Scriptures, gave directions as to the manner of observing the several precepts of religion, and were at once transcribers, lawyers, professors, and doctors of divinity. They filled one of the most

important and useful offices among the Jewish people. Great conscientiousness also for a long time characterized them in the discharge of their duties. The world owes much to their labors. They were justly held in very great esteem, though finally quite too highly exalted, especially when it came to be a capital offence to gainsay their expositions and sayings.

The Pharisees were a sect, or religious order, to which the Scribes themselves mostly belonged. This sect took its rise from devotion to the Divine word and law, and dates very far back in Jewish annals. It did much to conserve the orthodox faith under the ever-shifting circumstances of the nation after the great captivity. It was honorable and praiseworthy in its design, and its members solemnly engaged to separate themselves from every heathenish defilement, and to keep with unswerving strictness to the holy commands, especially those respecting tithes, food, and sabbaths, by which the chosen people were separated from other nations. It charged itself with the special guardianship of the Divine law and the ancestral customs, and in most respects, gave the best, truest, and amplest exhibition of the Jewish faith and peculiarities. The most earnest and devoted students and teachers of the law would naturally join themselves to this order, so that the name of *Pharisee* came to be synonymous with learning, culture, patriotism, and piety. Among the Jews, the most serious views of time and eternity, the truest appreciation of the Jewish calling, the

greatest confidence in Jehovah's promises, and the most wholesome temperance of life and practice were best preserved by this order. Among them were developed the ideas concerning the Messiah and the world to come, which the New Testament took up, purified and fixed. Among them, Hillel the illustrious, Simeon "the just," Zacharias "the righteous," Gamaliel the preceptor of Saul of Tarsus, and Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, were trained and educated. The Saviour himself did not hesitate to occupy Pharisaic ground in many of his utterances, nor disdain to use the arguments of this order in vindicating his conduct and his doctrines. And even in his sharpest condemnations of their errors, he does not fail to recognize them as filling the places of the highest and most legitimate representatives of the Jewish nation and church.

Among the teachings of these Scribes and Pharisees was that of a great and glorious kingdom, to be introduced by a Divine Messiah, who was to live and reign forever. The Scriptures had spoken of a "seed of the woman," a son of David, whose kingdom and throne should be forever, and his reign from the holy hill of Zion over all nations, executing justice and judgment in the earth, and giving peace and salvation to Israel. These sacred predictions were the soul and spirit of the highest hopes, the gladdest songs, and the sublimest anticipations of the Jewish people. All their hymns, all their ceremonies, all their sacred books, were full of them. On them special emphasis was laid

in all the comments and expositions of their scholars and divines. And the doctrine of a nearing kingdom of blessedness, was the central article of the Jewish creed.

That they often miscolored it and associated with it many extravagant and unfounded notions, there is no question now. They were often too much captivated with its external grandeur, at the expense of its heavenly and spiritual aspects; and they linked it too exclusively to the carnal Israel. Yet there was great and mighty truth involved in what they expected, and much precious wheat among the chaff. The King Messiah of whom they sung was not a myth; and the kingdom they looked for him to bring, was not a mere fancy of the imagination. Behind their carnal dreams there was a Divine reality. There is a reign of God, a "kingdom of the heavens," which withdrew itself from the earth when Adam fell, and which has ever since been struggling for re-establishment among men. The revelations and appointments of God in every age, have been nothing more nor less than means and motions for the coming again of that kingdom. John the Baptist preached it as then near at hand; so did the seventy evangelists; and so did Christ himself. To reach that kingdom was ever the aim of all the observances of the pious, and all the efforts of the saints. In the various records of God, in all the dispensations, and in all the thinking of God's people, entrance into that kingdom was contemplated as the fruition of man's highest blessedness.

It was not the common hope respecting the kingdom, but their idea respecting the qualifications for entering that kingdom, that the blessed Saviour here criticizes. He affirms the existence of such a "kingdom of the heavens," and tells of some in it who are "great," and some who are "least." He also set forward this kingdom as the great object of human hope, the perfection of human attainment, and the consummation of human happiness. Only "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," the grounds on which they expected to attain it, were not of such a sort as to secure a portion in it. "*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

Let us glance, then, at some of the defects of Pharisaic righteousness, that we may learn wherein ours must go beyond it to qualify us for admission into the expected kingdom. And may God help us to see the truth, and to profit by it!

1. It is very manifest from the New Testament, that the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was a righteousness of the outward letter, rather than of the inward spirit. These people were very punctilious in externals, careful in ceremonial observances and refinements, but too generally regardless of the heart and affections.

Now man has both a body and a soul; and it is only in the union of the two that his proper being consists. A man without a soul, is an offensive carcass; and a man without a body, is a nothing,

so far as this world and life are concerned. And so there is both an outward and an inward in religion, which cannot be divorced without damage and destruction. In every dispensation, God has ordained external observances. Worship without externals of worship, is to mortals a nonentity—a thing that is not. The Saviour does not give it as a defect of the Pharisees, that they were careful in observing these outward things of the law. Indeed, it is only by means of the external that we can at all present or embody the spiritual. The fault was not that they were punctilious in outward things, but that in their attention to the outward, they lost and contradicted the true spirit. As Jeremy Taylor puts it, "They were curious to wash their hands, but cared not to purify their hearts; they would give alms, but hate him that received it; they would go to the temple, but did not revere the glory of God that dwelt there between the cherubims; they would fast, but not mortify their lusts; they would say good prayers, but not labor for the grace they prayed for." They did well as far as they went. These outward things were good, and meant to assist and express the inward. As the Chaldeans taught morals by mystic words, and the Egyptians by hieroglyphics, and the Greeks by fables; so God, by outward rites and ceremonies, sought to have the hand help the heart, and the service of the body aid the obedience of the spirit. And it is very important that we avail ourselves of these externals. To neglect or despise them, would make our righteous-

ness less than that of the Pharisees, whereas Christ requires that it include all theirs, and at the same time go far beyond it. The great preacher to whom I have just referred, considers it strange that this should be needful to be pressed upon Christians; yet so it is. "Upon a pretence that we must serve God with the mind, some are such fools as to think that it is enough to have a good meaning; and because we must serve God in the spirit, therefore they will not serve God with their bodies; and because they are called upon to have the power and life of godliness, they abominate all external works as mere forms; that is, because the soul is the life of a man, therefore it is fitting to die, and lay aside the body, in order that we may live!" No, no; God asks for our bodies as well as our minds and hearts. "Our voice, and tongue, and hands, and feet, and very bowels, must be servants of God, and do the work of the commandments;" but in and with the external, there needs to be a true spirit, and a right mind, and a proper reverence and obedience of the heart, which the Pharisees had not.

2. Another defect in their righteousness was its narrowness and partiality. They condemned sins of the particular letter, and made nothing of corresponding transgressions not specifically condemned. "If they abstained from murder, they thought it very well, though they made no scruple of murdering their brother's fame; they would not cut his throat, but they would call him fool, or invent lies in secret, and publish his disgrace

openly; they would not dash out his brains, but they would be extremely and unreasonably angry with him; they would not steal their brother's money, but they would oppress him in crafty and cruel bargains. The commandment forbade them to commit adultery; but because fornication was not named, they made no scruple of that; and being commanded to honor their father and mother, they would give them good words and fair observances; but because it was not named that they should maintain them in their need, they thought they did well enough to pretend 'corban,' and let their father starve." And while they were careful to "pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin," they "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." There was a lack of balance, a want of consistency, and a gross partiality in such goodness, ill befitting one who hopes for the kingdom of God. True godliness calls for a different and better show. There is a comprehensive spirit in the law, which is more its proper self than its outward specifications, just as the mind and spirit of a man are more really the man than his face, limbs, and body. Not murder only, but everything murderous and ill-spirited; not adultery only, but everything unchaste; not theft only, but everything covetous, needs to be put away. Not only the sin, but all the ways that lead to it; not only the forms of sin, but the whole principle from which it springs; not only the personal deed of evil, but all procurement or sanction of it in others; are reached and condemned. God's

commandment is exceeding broad; and until we learn to take it in its proper length and breadth, and aim to live its whole spirit as well as its particular specifications, our righteousness does not sufficiently exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees to admit of our entrance into the kingdom.

3. Pharisaic righteousness likewise contented itself too much with mere abstinences and negations. If it only refrained from what is forbidden, it was but little concerned about the positive virtues. If there was no overt commission of evil, it mattered not about the absence of good deeds and affections. In Christ's summary of the law, everything is positive: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself;" but, in the Pharisaic code, while it was mortal sin to blaspheme God, a man might still not glorify God, and pass for innocent. To speak against Moses was a crime unto death, but ambition, pride, covetousness, and unmercifulness, were passed as venial. Men were reckoned good, not for doing good, but for not doing evil. But a mere negative righteousness is not all that God requires: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is a sin." James 4: 17. There is as much unrighteousness in omission as in commission. We are not only to refrain from doing evil, but likewise to "learn to do well." True piety is active; and genuine righteousness is practical. It does not sit at home in mere seclusion from posi-

tive wrong, but goes abroad with a glad heart to the doing of positive good. Jesus was a righteous man, and has given the true example for us to follow; but the sum of his life was, that "he went about doing good." "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," as well as to "keep unspotted from the world"—to "live soberly, righteously and godly," as well as to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts."

4. There was also this bad feature in the ethics of these people, that they mutilated the law's proper unity, reversed the principle that failure in one point makes guilty of all, and considered it enough to keep the law in general. Nay, it was a common proverb among them: "Let a man devote himself to the keeping of one positive commandment, and he need care but little for the rest." To attend to more they considered better, but to attend to one they considered enough for a good hope. If the evil were only less than the good, they were sure God would not refuse them a place in the kingdom. "They would devour widow's houses, and make it up by long prayers; they would love their nation, and hate their prince; offer sacrifice, and curse Cæsar in their heart; advance Judaism, and destroy humanity." The necessity of a universal obedience, or of the rotund filling out of the law in all its requirements, was not embraced in their way of measuring a righteous man, or his fitness for glory. That sentence of James, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law,

and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all" (2: 10), true as it is, did not once enter into their thoughts. To them the day of judgment is to put a man's good and evil in opposite scales of the balance, and to determine his character and destiny by whichever is heaviest. Their whole conception was commercial. But it was a miserable conceit, mutilating and dishonoring God's holy law, and deluding men to destruction. Nothing but a perfect righteousness can fulfil a perfect law; and failure in any particular is a fatal defect. The law is like a chain, made up of many links; and though but one link in the whole length of it be broken, the chain is broken, and condemnation comes. He, therefore, that would make amends for his defections in one direction by his greater devotion in another, only deceives himself, and the hopes built on such a righteousness must perish.

5. Another defect in the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was, that it leaned more on blood in the veins than on thorough obedience in the life. The heathen world, though without the written law, embraced many moralists as good as these Jews; but they were not considered righteous, because not of the tribes of Jacob. Virtuous as other men might be, they were only vile dogs to these Jerusalemites, because not of the seed of Abraham and the elect nation. Was not Israel God's chosen people? Had he not sworn to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David? Had he not reproved kings for their sake, and given them victory in the day of battle, and brought to naught

the power of their enemies, and pledged to them perpetual protection and favor? Were they not the worshippers of that God who redeemed Jacob at the first, and who covenanted never to leave nor forsake them? Were they not the authorized keepers and expounders of God's oracles, and the very children of the prophets? Did not the kingdom belong to them as a patrimonial inheritance? Was not Messiah, their king, to subdue all nations and bring all kings to bow down at his feet? How, then, could it be that they should fail, or their righteousness prove inadequate? With such ideas they built up hope and confidence even to the last extremity. But religion is not a thing of blood and nationality. Great may have been the faith and piety of the fathers, and great the promises to their seed; but if the children have not a corresponding faithfulness, all must go for nothing in the day of judgment. Not ancestry, but personal conformity to God;—not tribe, but faith;—not exalted calling or election, but a true obedience;—is the thing which determines our admission into the kingdom of God.

6. But the greatest defect of all was the self-sufficiency of the righteousness of these Scribes and Pharisees. It proposed justification on the ground of its own worth and merit. It propounded itself as begetting a right to the kingdom, having earned it by its abstinences and its works. Even to this day, the Jew builds all his hopes of heaven on his own innocence and righteousness. But such edifices are founded upon the sand. The

day of trial will sweep them away utterly. Not all the righteousness of the holiest saint that ever lived, nor all the righteousness of all the saints, is of itself sufficient to put any soul into heaven on the ground of merit. It is written in the forefront of the oldest book in the New Testament, and reiterated in all the teachings of the Scriptures, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified." Rom. 3 : 20. If there be nothing on which to rest our hopes but the sufficiency of *our* goodness, innocence, and virtue, then farewell forever to all our dreams of heaven; for we never shall get there. If there be not some unmerited mercy and grace of God—some virtue of sacrifice, beyond our power or procurement, freely substituted in the room and stead of our defects—some imputation through mere unmeritorious acceptance on our part—the whirring swords of fire that guard the entrances to Paradise will never, never cease to flash their flaming condemnation against any approaches by us. And in this, above all things, must our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, in that it confesses itself utterly inadequate, a mere nothing, in itself a mass of worthless filth, and grasps hold of Jehovah's undeserved mercy, and rests in the merit, righteousness, and satisfaction of Jesus Christ alone. From the curse of the law there is no escape by any obedience to the law which mere man can render; but "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," that we might receive the promise

by faith alone. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," so the righteousness that begets for us a title to heaven, is not the righteousness of our obedience, but the righteousness of our blessed Saviour accounted to us through our faith in what he has done for us. The only availing righteousness is this righteousness of God, which the Scribes and Pharisees rejected, and went about seeking to establish their own righteousness, which is forever inadequate to save.

But, because no righteousness or works of ours can entitle us to a place in the kingdom, we are not to fall into the opposite error of regarding our endeavors as altogether indifferent and unnecessary. Though no doings of ours can save us, yet we mistakenly count ourselves on the way to heaven if the spirit of obedience be not in us. Even "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:17. Though we should have a clear title to heaven, if we be lacking in the moral fitness to enjoy it, that title cannot profit us. We require sanctification as well as justification; and the two must necessarily go together, or we have neither.

Faith is a living, active, practical principle. As it appropriates and rests on the righteousness of Christ, it at the same time sets one upon the path of unswerving obedience to the whole will of Christ.

Heaven is a holy place. "The kingdom of heaven is righteousness." There can be no enjoy-

ment of it without a proper "meetness" for it. Oil and water will not mix. Light cannot dwell with darkness. In like manner, a man with his earthly lusts upon him, and his heart and mind undisciplined to the mind and will of God, can never find a home in heaven. If there be no love for God, and virtue, and the ways of purity—no heart for the sacred, the true, and the good—no relish for the pursuit of holiness—no affinity for moral excellence and heavenly consecration—there can be no proper heaven. He who hath the right hope in him must needs also purify himself even as God is pure.

There be many who live in dissoluteness and impenitence, who yet wish and hope for a place in heaven. It is a vain wish, and a hope that never can be realized, if they turn not from their evil ways. There be many who are repeating the ancient Scribes and Pharisees, and cannot see how it is possible for them to fail of eternal life. But their fond anticipations will never be fulfilled, if they come not to a better mind. Here stand the solemn words of Jesus, and no man can alter them, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." In vain do men attend to outward forms and ceremonies of religion, if their hearts be not in them. In vain are we scrupulous in some things, if the spirit of universal obedience be absent. In vain do we keep ourselves from gross vices, if we be not given to the work of positive duty and use-

fulness. In vain do we boast of our exalted descent, relations, and privileges, if we do not live up to them. And in vain is even our best goodness and morality, if we have not learned to account it all nothing without faith in Jesus as our sinbearer and Redeemer. We may hold the old traditions, tithe mint, anise and cummin, make long prayers, eat nothing unclean, bathe ourselves every time we come in from the thronged street, sprinkle our tables, dishes and beds with the waters of purification, shut ourselves in from all secular activity on the Sabbaths, read the Bible with holy reverence, bind its texts on our wrists, wear them on our foreheads, carry them as charms in our bosoms, and boast our kinship with the prophets and descent from the most noted of God's saints; and yet, if we have not learned to cast away from us all idea of merit, to believe and trust in the mercy and grace of Christ only, and out of love to him to devote body and soul to his service, no place in the kingdom of heaven can we ever have. For this is the way, and none other will answer. The voice of all the Scripture, the voice of all right wisdom and conscience, is: "*This is the way; walk ye in it; yea, walk ye* IN IT."

O help us, Jesus, from on high!
We know no help but Thee:
O help us so to live and die
As Thine in heaven to be!

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MARK 8 : 1–9. In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

AN affecting picture of want, and a still more remarkable supply of that want, are here brought to our contemplation.

We are introduced by the Evangelist to a great multitude of people—(παμπόλλου ὄχλου); a multitude, not only as to numbers but as to class and the promiscuous manner of their assemblage. They belonged to the various towns and villages bordering on the shores of the sea of Galilee. They had mostly been moved as crowds in general, and gone out into the wilderness whither

Christ had betaken himself, to see and hear this famous teacher and worker of miracles. Wherever there is anything new, unusual, or exciting going on, there the crowd is sure to collect. People will thus run together, and put themselves to every sort of inconvenience and exposure, just to gape and wonder, as much at each other as at what is transpiring. Such crowds ever came pressing upon the Saviour, because of the astonishing cures which he performed, and the general fame which his teachings and doings had created. The people came around him in the mountains, thronged upon him at the seaside, and followed him into his retirement in the wilderness. We find them enumerated by the thousand, the five thousand, not counting women and children. And here was one of those motley assemblages, numbered at "about four thousand."

These people were in distressing bodily want. For three days they had scarcely anything to eat. They were out in the wilderness, where no opportunity presented for the procurement of food. Many of them were far from home, and all of them beyond the reach of the ordinary necessaries of life. In the course of nature, many would inevitably have perished on their way to find the means of satisfying their hunger. They were really famishing for want of something to eat, and must have died of starvation and exposure, had there not been some extraordinary intervention for their relief.

It seems a little singular that they should have

so forgotten themselves, as to hurry out thus unprovided into the empty wilderness, and to tarry there till the pangs of helpless starvation were upon them, without having once considered how they were to get back alive. But just so it is again and again with the multitude. We would never see half the trouble and distress that we do, if people were only a little more considerate and thoughtful. And it is but a just retribution upon the improvidence and folly to which men give themselves, that they are made to suffer severely. What all classes need is more forethought and care. Had these people been more considerate, they would not have come into these straits. The greatest stress of the trouble fell where this lack was the most glaring. The ways of Providence are much more just and equal than some are disposed to think; and if people will not consider, they must suffer.

It was something to the credit of these people, however, and a fact which tends to relieve the rashness of their enthusiasm, that the distress they suffered was incurred in a measure by what was commendable. It was their zeal for Christ that thus led them from their homes, and carried them so far into the wilderness. It is probable that many of them did not really know why they thus went after the Saviour, and that some were impelled more by idle wonder, or even selfish motive, than by any appreciative devotion; but the general impulse was in a favorable direction. It was not wise to be so oblivious to their temporal necessi-

ties, but still it was on the road toward faith, discipleship, and superior blessing. With a right appreciation of Christ, it would be no unwisdom even to perish in following after him, rather than to live in ease and comfort by forsaking him and disregarding his word. And it is something of an excuse for these people, and a considerable palliation to the imprudence which caused their trouble, that it was incurred in some sort of following after Christ.

A good thing would it be, if people in general, who find themselves in hard necessities and pressing want, could plead as much in extenuation of what brought them into their distresses. The prodigal comes to the point of starvation, the sluggard goes begging for bread, the drunkard's home is full of sorrow and poverty, the churl is friendless and forsaken, those hurrying to be rich are pierced through with many unexpected griefs, people in competency and comfort are stripped of their possessions, operatives discontented with their wages are turned out penniless, prisons are filled with the sighs and groans of men deprived of their liberty and homes, and the streets are trod by those of heavy hearts who know not where to lay their heads; but who, of all these, can plead that their hardships and sorrows have come from following after Christ? Is it not rather by reason of their selfish wickedness and guilty disregard of sacred calls and obligations that they suffer? Not religious enthusiasm, but passion and unholy greed;—not zeal to see and hear the Saviour of

the world, but lust and avarice;—not mere forgetfulness of the wants of the body by absorption with the things of the kingdom of God, but an undue haste and guilty furor for the possessions and pleasures of this earthly life;—not wonder and admiration for Jesus, but dissatisfaction with the allotments of Providence, rebellion against the restraints of right morals, contempt for Divine authority, and the setting up of selfish likes and cravings in the place of the laws and inculcations of heaven;—these are the things that bring unhappiness and grief.

It sometimes turns out that men suffer in this world for their devotion to the things of the next. There have been those who have lost their good name, their friends, their fortunes, their liberties, their heads, for their faithful devotion to Jesus. But such is not the most common experience. And suffering in a good cause always carries with it compensations which do away with regrets. The greatest of miseries are those which men bring upon themselves by a course of life which admits of no apology.

Yet, with every extenuation in the improvident conduct of this famishing multitude, there was no earthly relief for them in the common course of things. The laws of nature, if not obeyed, are inexorable. Very early in the day, the Saviour seems to have directed attention to the perilous situation, and propounded the question as to how these people were to be fed. His disciples had pondered the matter, but saw no way of solving the problem.

Their baffled thinking could only return the question, "From whence can a man satisfy these with bread here in the wilderness?" There was a scanty supply for the little company, consisting of Christ and his disciples; but what were seven cakes and a few small fishes towards meeting the wants of the faint and starving thousands beside? To all mere human power the case was desperate. Without some great miracle of God, vast numbers would have to faint and die. Earth had no deliverance for them. Some might perchance have weathered through, and come out alive; but for the mass of them there was no help. Man's resources were all powerless. Commerce, agriculture, money, love, everything was at fault, and could bring no adequate relief. All creature-power stood paralyzed in the terrible emergency, without ability to give one ray of hope for deliverance and safety.

But man's extremity is God's opportunity. There was a heart to pity, that could not contemplate the situation unmoved. "Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude." The expression (σπλαγχνίζεσθαι) means more than a mere feeling of compassion—more than a mere emotion of the mind. It means an emotion so strong as to affect the body, stir the blood, and make the bowels yearn;—a degree of compassion which disturbs and agitates the whole being, and draws it out in active desire to see the suffering relieved. The idea is, that Jesus could not bear that these people,

now faint and famishing, should be allowed to go away and perish, as many must, if left to themselves. They had been indiscreet, inconsiderate, but their situation touched his very soul.

And what a picture is thus given us of the tenderness and goodness of our Lord! Jesus pities people in want of bread for the body, as well as those in want of food for their souls. He enters into our temporal as well as spiritual needs. He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmity, corporeal as well as mental and moral. Amid the many aches, and ills, and hard experiences of this world, this assurance we have, that he careth for us.

And still the more intense was his compassion on that famishing multitude, in view of the fact that they had come into this strait through some sort of zeal for him, to see, hear, and be near him. He gives the reasons for his intense solicitude, and emphasizes their having now been three days with him. He was the magnet which had set them in motion, and drawn them into that desert place. Intent only on beholding and listening to him, they forgot that they had bodies to be cared for. Heart and soul had been so occupied with regard to him as to become oblivious to weariness, hunger, and thirst, till now they were in this perilous and distressing situation. It was something of a seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, to the neglect of physical comfort, till physical strength was ready to perish. And this made the appeal all the stronger to the

Saviour's compassion, and filled him with an intensity of concern for them, deeper by far than any of them had for themselves.

Nor was this compassion a mere empty sentiment. It stimulated to action. It wrought and exhibited itself *in deed.* It set to relieve the distress that stirred it. As those people had pursued and clung to him at such sacrifices and risks that their curiosity and desire of soul might be satisfied, he could not allow that they should perish for want of earthly food. He had said in his first sermon, that all outward needs should be supplied wherever there is a full-hearted seeking of the things of God and salvation; and he would here make that promise good, though a great miracle should be necessary for the purpose. Never will he permit those to starve in body who sincerely cleave to him for heavenly bread, nor deny the needed temporal sustenance to them that seek in him the bread of life.

There be those who make sport of the thought that faith in Christ can help against the pangs of hunger, or the pinchings of bodily need. That a religious sentiment should serve to put bread in the mouths of the destitute, is to them ridiculous. And even unfledged apostles are often in such unfaith as to be in perplexity and doubt if he who saves the soul can also feed the body. The world, in its wisdom, does not know Christ, and so it doubts him, and laughs at trust in him. Well-meaning people get wrong in their Christology,

and it sets them wrong at every other point. Let men learn that Jesus is the Saviour of bodies, as well as of souls; that he is the Lord of harvests and of bread, as well as of moral precepts and spiritual counsels; that he lives not only in a system of doctrines and religious tenets, but also in sovereign potency over all the products of land and sea, as well as over all the hidden principles of production; that he is not only a marvellous prophet of truth who lived in the time long past, but also an enthroned king of the living present, swaying his potent sceptre over all worlds, all nations, and all affairs, and dispensing his comforts, blessings, and rebukes untrammelled by laws in nature or the economies of earth; and doubt will cease as to whether faith in him may not bring bread to the destitute, as well as pardon to the guilty, or hope of heaven to the dying. He who brought out ancient Israel from their slavery in Egypt, could also sustain them in the wilderness, feed them with bread from heaven, refresh them with waters where no waters were, and fulfil to them all his marvellous promises. Let the reason of man, or the science of earth, interpose what obstacles it may, the might and wisdom of God smiles at impossibilities, and says, It shall be done. And so here; to the utter confusion of all human philosophy, connection with Christ did put bread into the mouths of the starving. The whole famishing multitude did eat and were filled. Jesus merely opened his hand, and spoke his blessing, and the waste wilderness teemed with food. By

his sole and inscrutable power, seven cakes and a few small fishes multiplied in the sight of men as they partook, till four thousand hungry people were satisfied, and there remained over and above more than was on hand at the beginning of the marvellous transaction.

It would not be right to expect such interpositions as a common thing. God has his own ways for dealing out to men their daily bread; and those ways and rules must be observed and honored. But the power is with him. His hands are not bound. His resources are in no manner limited. He is the Omnipotent. And rather than that his promises should fail, the whole ordinary economy of things must yield, and a new order for the time be made to take its place. We have a Lord and Saviour who can save as well as pity, and at the same time that he compassionates with the emotion of a man, he can help with the potency of God.

But there was a method in his marvellous relief. Not only did the multitude eat to their satisfaction, but "*so* they did eat, and were filled." There was a particular style and arrangement in the case, notwithstanding the miraculousness of the supply. And in this *method*, we may also read important evangelic truths. Christ's miracles are didactic, as well as apologetic. They illustrate and teach, as well as certify and attest. In the material facts, there is also the symbolization of spiritual truths. This feeding of the faint and hungry multitude in the wilderness, tells of another

feeding by this selfsame Saviour—the feeding of faint and perishing souls.

There is an inner man, which must also have nutriment, or die eternally. There is a soul-hunger, as distressing as that of the body, which he alone can satisfy and relieve. All men apart from his kindly administrations have this want upon them, and must perish by reason of it, except as helped by him. When he looked forth from heaven on his errand to redeem the world, he beheld it a waste howling wilderness, crowded full of people, faint and starving for the bread of life. What he came for was to feed them—to impart unto them the true manna—to recover them from their distresses—to save them. It was his compassion for their suffering and endangered souls that brought him down among them. And the manner of imparting relief to the faint and hungry ones of the text, is a picture of the way in which he ministers salvation to perishing souls.

1. There were directions given which had to be obeyed. The record says, "He commanded the people to sit down on the ground." It was a simple requirement, and, to the natural eye, quite unimportant. People can eat standing up, or sitting on whatever is convenient, as well as sitting "down on the ground." But the order was positive for them to take this particular position; and it was every one's business to obey. Had any of them begun to rationalize and debate, murmured at the direction, and insisted on having their own way for it, they would not have been fed. The

order had to be obeyed. And so there are commands to be observed in order to get the bread of life. There must be a coming down, a sitting in the dust at Jesus' feet, a humiliation of self to his orders and institutes. Some people insist that they are no great sinners; that they have nothing to be humble about; that they can be just as good without being baptized, without connection with the Church, without submission to the rites and ordinances of Christianity; that they can see no use in this church-going, this saying of prayers, and this belittling of one's self with the routine of religious duties; that they can worship as well in the open fields, amid the outspread beauties of nature, as in sanctuaries built by human hands, and nourish their souls with their own thoughts and cogitations quite as satisfactorily as in the exercises of any religious assembly. And what are they saying in all this, but telling Christ that they do not intend to "sit down on the ground" as he has ordered. Their dignity is offended. They will stand on their feet like men. They will not surrender their manhood. In truth, they see no sense in the command. But, my brethren, if people will not do as the Lord directs, there is nothing on which to hang a hope that ever a particle of saving food shall they taste. This pride and self-consequence of men must come down. This stiff conceit by which people harden themselves against the plain and easy directions of the Gospel, must come out of them. People must be willing to receive the kingdom of heaven as pliant

little children, or they cannot have it. The lofty head must be humbled. The proud intellect must yield and surrender itself the same as the commonest sort of mankind. And if people are too consequential, dignified, and wise to take Christ's salvation as he proposes to give it, they must consent to do without. Sit down as he directs, or starve, is the only alternative.

2. He took what the people had, and added his power and blessing to it, and thus furnished the requisite supplies. They had seven cakes and a few small fishes. These he took, and gave thanks, and brake; and with them fed the entire multitude. Grace was never meant to supersede nature, but to work upon it, to help it, bless it, and augment it. God is a frugal economist. He never wastes what already exists. He is never prodigal in his creations. Christ might as easily have fed these people without the few handfuls that they had, but he chose to take what was already there, and to consecrate and develop that for the purpose. We have eyes, and ears, and hearts, and understanding wills, which can be of good service in our salvation. All that they need is to be brought to Christ, submitted to his handling, bathed in his words of blessing, and filled with his power, to serve most effectually. We know many important truths, and may learn many precious lessons, from natural reason and instinct; only they are too scanty to suffice for our salvation. The Gospel does not ignore these, but takes them, and blesses them, and amplifies them, and thus

provides for us the bread of life. The new nature is simply the old retouched, informed with new power, appropriated by a new consecration. The soul is naturally fed by seeing, by hearing, by understanding, by reasoning, and by willing, and doing, and feeling; and these seven loaves the Saviour uses, touches, blesses, and adds himself, his power, and Spirit to them, and thus creates the bread that feeds, and fills, and satisfies unto everlasting life.

3. But the food he furnished was given to these hungry ones, only through second hands. The bread and the fishes he "gave to his disciples to set before them, and *they* did set them before the people." Those who would not consent to take the provision from Peter, James, John, and the rest of these twelve particular men, could not have it. Christ has appointed a ministry—an office which is filled by men, who, by his authority and command, are set apart and ordained to officiate between Christ and their fellows. Their business is to take of the provision Christ furnishes, and to set it before those who are in need of it. This is their commission from the Lord himself, with which none else may intermeddle. And it is a great Gospel truth, altogether too much overlooked and disregarded in our degenerate days, that God has indissolubly linked the impartation of his saving grace to this ministerial office. Since Adam fell, in every age and dispensation, we find this written on the forefront of all evangelic accomplishment, that it is the pleasure of God, "*By the*

foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And where there has been no ministry, there has been no salvation. The bread of life no man can have, until it is ministerially conveyed to him. Be it through the living voice, or the written page, or the solemn sacrament, that voice implies a speaker, that page a writer, that sacrament an administrator, who is God's appointed agent for the carrying of it to him who gets it. Nor is there any saving food, forgiveness, or eternal life for men, which is not brought, articulated, and delivered unto them through some one or another acting as Christ's ministerial servant. In whatever method appointed, by whatever name called, by whatever conventionalities marked, or in whatever plainness officiating, there must be a *ministry*, without which no man can ever learn that there is a Saviour, much less come to saving faith in him. The blessed bread and fishes never get from Christ's hands into the mouths of the perishing, but through the intermediate agency of second actors, whom he has set and authorized for the purpose. He has not, indeed, confined this office to specific orders. All Christians have a share in it. Every one in his place may be a minister to his brother; though some have this matter committed to them more specifically, amply, and distinctively than others. He that has gone into the heavens "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

Christ." Eph. 4: 10–12. These, then, men must acknowledge, their office respect, and their ministrations receive, or the intended edification and perfecting they cannot have. These are the ambassadors of God, set to minister to us the bread of life; and if people will not hear and deal with them; if they will refuse to take from ministers the salvation Christ hath given them to preach and dispense—there is no other remedy; they must go unfed, and faint, and perish.

Behold, then, my brethren, what a glorious Saviour the Gospel sets before us! How full of compassion, tenderness, and love, at the same time that he is the Lord, to whom all the powers of nature are subject! How mercifully considerate of all our wants, as well as ability to relieve them! How kind, orderly, and gracious in his arrangements to impart to us the bread of life! How simple and easy the conditions on which we may obtain, eat, and be forever satisfied!

The King of heaven his table spreads,
And dainties crown the board.
Not all the boasted joys of earth
Could such delight afford.

Pardon and peace to dying men,
And endless life are given;
And the rich blood that Jesus shed
To raise our souls to heaven.

Thousands of souls in glory now,
Were fed and feasted here;
And thousands more still on the way
Around the board appear.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW 7 : 15–23. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

THE Scriptures treat largely of *the false*—false gods, false Christs, false doctrines, false hearts, and false hopes. That there should have been necessity for this, is another proof of the perverseness and depravity of human nature, and of the fearful departure of man from that righteousness and truth in which he was created. But that the Scriptures should set themselves so diligently to discover what is false, and to point out what is spurious and untrustworthy, is another mark of the beneficence of God, and of the earnestness of his desire to have his erring children brought to the truth, and

saved from the ruin that is upon them. It is the first step to salvation to know that we need it, and to be admonished of the true way to find it—what oracles to heed, and what to avoid—what will stand the test of the day of judgment, and what will not.

Two classes of false characters are brought to view in the text,—False Prophets, and False Christians. We will look first at one, and then at the other.

I.

A *prophet* in the stricter sense of the word, is one who foretells future events. In a more general sense, a prophet is any one who declares the mind and will of God—a teacher of religion—a public instructor in divine things. A true and faithful prophet is a precious gift of God. The sublimest comforts and hopes of men and nations are dependent upon such prophetic administrations. What would Israel have been without Moses, and Eli, and Samuel, and their successors, by whom the sacred records of the ancient Scriptures were given? And what would we be without Christ, and his apostles, and the succession of ministers of his by whom the New Testament was given, preserved, and perpetuated in the world for these slow-rolling ages? Our most precious distinction in this world is, that we have a free Gospel, and know what the will of God is, and by what means we may securely count on his everlasting favor; but it has all come to us by

means of just such agencies and ministrations as pertain to true and faithful prophets.

A *false* prophet is one who assumes the prophetic office without a call from God, or takes upon himself to put forward his own thoughts, fancies, and devices as if they had the Divine sanction. Any false teacher, or disseminator of falsehood for sacred truth, is a false prophet. There were many such in ancient times, of whom we read in the Scriptures; likewise also in the Saviour's time, and in all ages; for we read of "the false prophet" co-operating with "the beast" even down to the very day of Christ's coming, and doing his infamous work of deceit and persecution until arrested by the day of judgment itself.

The admonition of the text has therefore the force of a general precept, applicable to all people, in all this dispensation. It accordingly assumes, that false teachers will be found in every age, and that ravenous destroyers of the souls of men will never be wanting till Christ comes. The conversion of all men, then, and a millennium of universal righteousness, truth, and peace, will never be, this side of the day of judgment. False prophets will come; and so long as there is falsity in the prophets, there will be apostasy in the Church, and disaster in the world.

Nor is it always easy to detect which are the true prophets, and which are the false. In outward appearance and profession, the spurious wear the same garb as the genuine. The most ravenous wolves, who come only to gratify their own

lusts and appetites, nevertheless are disguised in the clothing of those whom they mean to devour. It was out of the very sublimity of pretended devotion to Moses and the elders, that the Pharisees rejected and crucified Christ. The most infamous usurpations and pretences of Popery, are put forward in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and present the deceits of hell in the livery of intensest saintship. The worst antinomian licentiousness cloaks itself in the garb of doing honor to the Gospel, and in honor of the blood of Christ repeals the very decalogue. And the Universalist votes hell a fable out of pure regard for the Divine mercy, and makes salvation impossible or unnecessary on pretence of magnifying the grace from which it springs. The truth is, that falsehood could not exist, or make the least show of success, except by making itself appear as if it were truth. If a false prophet did not seek to make the show of being a true prophet, or claim to himself the credit and position which are due to the true prophet, he would be shunned as a demon, and there would be no need for such admonitions as are here found.

But though it is difficult to distinguish between true prophets and false ones, *the false may be detected.* Their plausible disguises are among their marks. The very anxieties which errorists show to have everything appear in a fair, reasonable, and attractive light, is one of the indications that they are not so burdened with messages of truth as they pretend. There is also a rule, given by

the Saviour himself, by which they may always be detected. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." It is a law of nature, which holds good in the sphere of morals also, that the true character of a thing is always manifest in the result of its own natural outworkings. We may be uncertain of a seed so long as it remains alone; or of a growth until it comes to the ultimate product or fruit; but when either becomes fully developed, it inevitably shows what it is, or that from which we may infallibly judge what it is. And this is the rule by which we are to try the teachings of men. We are to look at the effect of those teachings upon themselves, and upon their followers—at the fruits which they bring forth—at their tendencies—at the manner in which they affect the community, the heart, and the life. And if these are evil, the doctrines which produce them are evil. It is thus that we are to test all systems of religion,—Paganism, Deism, Islamism, Mormonism, Christianity, Spiritualism, and every other system. If the legitimate fruit is good, the tree is good; but if the reverse, the thing is of the devil.

In the same way are we to test particular doctrines alleged as Christian. If the legitimate fruits are bad, the doctrine is false, and the teachers of it are false prophets.

And so too in reference to the measures and methods adopted for promoting Christianity and

the preserving of its life and power among men. That is good whose ultimate fruits are good, and everything else is to be renounced and denounced as evil.

It is also important that we should rigidly and constantly apply this rule, and act on the conclusions to which its proper use would bring us. Some people think that it matters not what doctrines are tolerated, or believed, or disbelieved, and that we are to acknowledge all classes of religionists as brethren, whether we agree with them or not. The Saviour seems to have been of a different opinion. His command is to "beware of false prophets," and to be careful as to the doctrines to which we give place or attention. Where there is falsehood, there is destruction. The sheep's garb may be over it, but the wolf's ravenousness is in it. Some errors are more pernicious than others, but there is mischief in all untruth, and it is our business as Christians, and our only security as men, to "beware of false prophets," and to keep ourselves aloof from prowling heresy. Laxity in doctrine, or indifference to the purity of our faith, is like sheep consenting to companionship with wolves—like opening our houses to thieves; like exposing our families to the subtleties of libertines.

It was a law in ancient times, and one which God himself gave to his people, that the prophet who should presume to speak in the name of the Lord what the Lord had not commanded him to speak, or that should speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet was to be put to death.

That law, as to its letter, is no longer in force, but as to its spirit, it is. It is the law of spiritual self-preservation, which demands that we kill out of our hearts, and out of our minds, and refuse to give life or place to any false doctrine, or any teaching which conflicts with the Divine word, and the faith once delivered to the saints. Truth is necessarily and forever intolerant of error, as God himself is necessarily and forever intolerant of sin. Where mere opinions and deductions of men are concerned, there may be forbearance and toleration, but not where we have a Thus saith the Lord.

II.

But, from official personages the Saviour descends to private individuals. As there are false prophets, so there are also false religionists—people who impose upon themselves by the forms, or show, or seeming works of piety, without the true life of it in their souls.

Most men, indeed, have some religion. God has given us instincts and faculties which will in some sort stir and feel after him, as plants in a cave dream of the sun, though they never have seen it. And these feelings and instincts so far prevail over most men, as to move them to some sort of religious manifestations, however far they may fall short of acceptable godliness. There are many with whom the Gospel has weight enough to command assent, and at least a general acquiescence, even where its power is not felt unto salva-

tion. Even Herod heard John gladly, and did many things. And people are very apt to persuade themselves into the hopes of Christianity, when yet there has been no hearty surrender to it. It is a sad truth that it is so; but the fact is evident, and is continually being brought forward in the Scriptures, that we may consider it, examine ourselves well, and make sure work in the matter.

The Saviour here particularizes several classes, who only impose upon themselves by thinking that they are Christians, or that the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

The religion of some is a religion of mere profession. They *say* unto him "Lord, Lord," but *do not* the will of the Father which is in heaven. Their piety is a thing of words and forms, rather than one of life and heart. They call Christ "Lord;" they build temples for his worship; they swear by his religion and his holy evangely; they are baptized in his name; but they do not everywhere and in everything hold his laws to be supreme. They take his word for their guide and rule, in a vague and indefinite sense, but not in the practical way of fashioning all their conduct to it. He has commanded us to deny ourselves—not to fix our aims on the meat that perisheth—not to be concerned to lay up treasures on the earth—not to take anxious thought for our worldly wants or promotion—not to return evil for evil—but to labor for eternal riches—to do good even to our enemies—to fix our eyes and desires upon the world to come and the blessed things of the ever-

lasting kingdom. These are his commands, written as with a sunbeam in his own word. But how many call themselves Christians, in whom nothing of all this is to be found!

There are others who go further, and to their profession add some of the more striking works and offices of Christianity. They not only call Christ Lord, but are also participants in the work of propagating the faith—they prophesy in his name—they cast out devils by his power and truth—they even do many wonderful works, not excepting miracles; yet, with all, Christ does not acknowledge them, and spurns them from him, as workers of iniquity. Their defect is, that they are more concerned about their own praise and fame than for the honor of Christ. Their religion is not one of faith, which rests on Christ as their only hope and righteousness, but one of wages, which looks to the securement of heaven by the merit and brilliancy of their own deeds and achievements. Instead of doing all, and still considering themselves unprofitable servants, whom Christ's grace alone can save, they pride themselves on their social integrity, their benevolent deeds, their grand zeal, and their great efficiency, and rest on their own works and devotions for the making good of their title to Divine favor. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they fail to submit themselves to the righteousness which alone can save them. They are very zealous, often, for the Lord of hosts, but they only impose upon them-

selves. The first rudiments of saving religion they have not yet learned, even though the gift of prophecy be theirs, and faith to remove mountains.

And fearful is the end which the Saviour here sets before us as awaiting those who go on in such self-deception. He talks familiarly of *a day*, up to which they may carry their self-delusion, but which shall dissipate it forever when it will be too late to remedy defects.

The universal forebodings of humanity, men's moral reasonings on providence and analogy, and the teachings of the Scriptures everywhere, concur in the conclusion, that a day of final reckoning and just adjudication must come—a day when the dead shall rise, and the Son of God descend again from heaven—a day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, when everything shall stand revealed in its true light, and when an everlasting distinction shall be drawn between those who are Christ's and those who are not—a day when the true King of earth shall come to reward every man according to his deeds, and to judge and settle into final peace this world of ours, so shaken by the storms and wars of centuries. When that day cometh, the true people of God "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," but "not every one that saith Lord, Lord." The religion of mere profession shall then be shown its utter emptiness. And "many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will Christ profess unto them,

I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

O, my brethren, it is a solemn and affecting thought, that there are people who are deluding themselves with dreams of heaven, from which they will never be awakened and undeceived till they find themselves disowned at the judgment seat. They think they are Christians, and will continue to think they are Christians, perhaps to the non-churching of others, and will only find out that they are *not* Christians, when the day of judgment comes! Alas, for the disappointment which shall overwhelm them then! To think, what opportunities they had—how near they came to the kingdom—how easily they might have made their calling and election sure—and yet to fail so completely in the very moment when they expected most confidently to triumph,—what a portion!

But, thank God, it is not yet the portion of any one of us. Near as we may be to that mysterious day, we still have time and opportunity to escape so terrible a discomfiture. If we have been Christians in name only, we may become Christians in reality. And if we have been hitherto counting on our own works, goodness, and prayers, instead of resting as helpless sinners upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone, we still may repent of our folly, and set ourselves to build securely upon the right foundation. If we have all this while been only hearing the word of God and not doing it, we yet may change our ways, and be numbered

among the obedient and faithful. And to stir us up to this, is one great aim of the Saviour in the text.

Let us see to it, then, my brethren, that we receive not this grace of God in vain, but examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith, and prove our own selves. Especially let us take to heart the great practical lessons of this day's Gospel, and set ourselves to prize and value God's truth, to beware of all corrupters of the faith, and to set ourselves to be, not hearers of the word only, but, *doers* of the same; giving all diligence to add to our faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in us, and abound, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For if we do these things, we shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom.

Jesus, still lead on,
Till our Rest be won;
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand
To our Fatherland.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE 16 : 1-9. And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

IT has been justly remarked, that not one of our Lord's parables has received so many and such diverse interpretations, as that which is brought before us in this day's Gospel. That it involves difficulties, hard to be satisfactorily cleared up to our imperfect understanding, must be admitted. There is, however, an abundance of suggestion and instruction

contained in the narrative, and the remarks of the Saviour upon it, to impress, edify, and improve every one who will attentively consider it.

One of the most important things to be observed in order to a right understanding of it is, that it gives an account of very unrighteous transactions on the part of a very unrighteous man. It is a parable of an "*unjust* steward." Not one word is said of him, but was intended to show that he was a dishonest, proud, selfish, unprincipled man. The whole picture, from first to last, is one of thorough worldliness, infidelity, and fraud.

The case is that of a man in a position of trust and office of considerable consequence—"a steward" employed by a certain rich landholder to superintend his possessions, manage his estates, and attend to the administration of his affairs. In accepting such a position, he was bound, by every wholesome and honorable consideration, to do the best for his employer that he justly could. But, instead of attending to his duties with fidelity, he fell into a common fault of officeholders, neglected his proper business, and "wasted his lord's goods." Whether by embezzlement to be expended upon his own lusts, or by mere careless inattention, is not stated, either being equally guilty. Perhaps he was a riotous and sporting man, whose irregularities led to misappropriations of his employer's funds, as well as wasteful neglect of his employer's interests. At any rate, there was wicked maladministration in office.

His faithlessness at length became notorious.

His dishonesties and wastes were talked of until they came to the ears of his lord. A day of settlement was ordered, and his dismission from his place determined.

An emergency now arose, which he should have considered before. His unfaithfulness was about to deprive him of his place and his living, and he had nothing provided against the necessities which were thus to come upon him. "And he said within himself, *What shall I do?*" Honest labor presented itself; but that suited neither his previous habits nor his inclinations, and he dismissed it at once, saying, "I cannot dig." There are people who would rather give themselves to any crimes, than to work honestly for a livelihood; and this faithless steward was one of them. Begging was the next alternative; but for that he was too proud. It was not the dishonesty of it in his case that deterred him, but the humiliation of it. He was not ashamed of his maladministrations—not ashamed of his unwillingness to do honest labor,—but he was ashamed to beg. It is no disgrace to be poor, and no dishonor for helpless poverty to solicit alms where there is no other lawful resource; but it is a sin for people to be proud, and above the necessities of their real situation. And to the rest of his crimes, this faithless man adds this sin also. He was a knave, and his knavery adhered to him all the way through.

A third expedient presented itself, and that he eagerly embraced. "I am resolved what to do." I will defraud my lord still more. I will call to-

gether his tenants. I will alter the terms of their leases. I will so reduce their obligations to him as to enrich them, and put them under obligations to me; that, out of their abundance, they may receive me into their favor, and supply my wants. "So he called every one of his lord's debtors, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore." And so in reference to all his master's tenants and debtors. It was a piece of sheer rascality from beginning to end. There was no honesty in the man. He was out and out a child of this world—an example of the bad faith and base principles which govern in those who have no fear of God before their eyes. He was one of that class of men who abound in every age and every community, who have their representatives in every office and every place of trust, who make nothing of robbing their employers, plundering public treasuries, intercepting just revenues, or enriching themselves or their friends at the expense of other men, making their living by malfeasance of one kind or another. He had behaved unrighteously at the first, and he did still more unrighteously at the last. Unfaithful *in* office, he was too lazy to work, and too proud to beg, when *out* of it; and so he makes one bold grasp, by which to secure his

ease after his place is gone. In any light that the case may be viewed, there is baseness, knavery, and high-handed iniquity.

And yet, with all the wickedness of the transaction, there was a degree of sharpness, penetration, and forethought displayed in it, which even the wronged landholder could not but admire, and which the Saviour himself brings forward as worthy of all imitation in the higher sphere of the children of light. Though he did most unjustly, he yet did "wisely." There was a cunning, skill, calculation, farsightedness, and perfection of adjustment of means to his ends, worthy of all praise, if only it had been used in a better cause. His lord, of course, could not, and did not, approve his fraud. It was simply a piece of crafty infamy, which no one could justify. But it was so adroitly conceived and executed, that no one could fail to be struck and impressed with its masterly wit.

We need not, therefore, be surprised at the fact, that the wronged landlord commended the subtle wisdom of the infamous deed. Who has not often been struck with admiration at the address and shrewdness with which wicked men have managed to accomplish their base designs! Who has not been compelled to wonder at the bold enterprise, the profound calculation, the consummate skill, and the perfect adjustment of the minute details, which have characterized some of the most diabolical schemes on record! There is often a far-seeing wisdom even in vice, and a dexterity in the cheats by which we are the sufferers, which

we cannot but commend even while we censure. Intellect is admirable, even when reprehensibly employed; and we spontaneously applaud the prudence and forecast of its possessor, whilst outraged and smarting from the iniquity to which it is devoted. And so it was with this injured landlord. He commended the unjust steward, not for his dishonesty and injustice, but "*because he had done wisely*"—because he had shown such a subtle prudence and foresight in providing for his future necessities. He pronounces the whole proceeding "unjust," but still admires the shrewdness with which it was conceived and carried out.

And it is just here that we find the chief point in this parable. Separating the morality of the deed from the wit that directed it, the Saviour fixes upon the skill and prudence of this unjust man as an illustration of the foresight and calculation which should mark our conduct with reference to the necessities that are upon us in relation to eternity. Here was a mere child of the world, acting only with regard to the things of the world; and yet displaying a wisdom in his unprincipled management, which needed only to be transferred to the sphere of the spirit and religious devotion, to render it the very model of excellence. Nay, he acted more wisely for his base ends, than the children of righteousness in the high things of eternal blessedness. So the Saviour pronounces, and would have his disciples learn even from one so infamous and unjust.

We are all stewards; and the time is near when

we must give an account of our stewardship. A few more days or years, which count like hours on the clock, and this whole play on earth will be over. Our shops, and stores, and offices will soon know us no more. Our homes, and lands, and places must soon pass into the possession of other stewards, and our affairs no more require our attention or management. The day of reckoning cometh apace, when we may no longer be stewards, and when there will be no more remedy for mistakes, and no more time for amendment of wrongs. And then will come wants and necessities against which provision must now, and "quickly," if ever, be made. Now therefore is our chance. We are yet in the stewardship, and while its powers and opportunities are still in our hands, our Saviour would have us copy the forethought, the diligence, and the penetration of this unjust man, and thus secure ourselves against the risks and dangers for eternity. As the children of this world are thus "wiser in their generation than the children of light," we are to carry their discrimination into the sphere of these sacred things, and "make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations."

There are three things specially noticeable in the case of this shrewd villain, in which his example furnishes copy for our imitation.

1. He considerately directed his thoughts towards the future. He had wise respect to the necessities that would be upon him when he should

be no longer steward. It was not in a Christian or just way that he considered and acted; but he did enter upon a thorough canvassing of his case, viewed from a worldly standpoint. His worldliness and wickedness we are of course to eschew. But as he looked forward to his needs when his stewardship was ended, so are we to have respect to the solemn realities of the judgment and another life.

The great sin of people is, that they calculate only for this world, and their present comforts and necessities. What they shall eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed, are the things that enlist their studies and occupy their thoughts. Their main ambition terminates in what is earthly and temporal. They thirst, and calculate, and scramble for riches, and never once give themselves to the work of laying up for themselves treasures in heaven. They covet honors and emoluments, but not such as are only attained by the saints. They are awake to every scheme of gain or advancement that presents itself in this world's alluring show, but they are oblivious to the sublime possessions and promotions which heaven holds out to them.

Moses once exclaimed with reference to the stupid tribes of Israel, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" And it is just this looking to the future—this moving forward in our thoughts to take in what is to come when the turmoil and bustling noise of the present life is over—

this forecasting as to how it will be with us when the pursuits and business of this world have ended, —that constitutes one great element of the lesson which the Saviour desires us to learn from the parable before us. We are to look to eternity, to dispose our lives with reference to eternity, and to live for another order of things which yet remains to be revealed.

2. The unjust steward was also very diligent in improving his time, and making the most of his opportunities. No sooner had he learned what change was to be made in his circumstances, than he set himself earnestly to the inquiry what he should do, and suffered no time to be wasted in carrying his plans into execution. If ever there was energy in him, it was now called into the fullest activity. Here was wisdom. Had he waited, postponed, delayed, the opportunity would have passed. But he acted promptly, and so accomplished his object. And in this he is an example for us. We must know our time, and embrace our opportunities. O that miserable delusion, *Time enough yet!* How many has it utterly and irremediably ruined! How many good resolves and high hopes has it brought to naught! It is an easy pillow; but it is red as scarlet, saturated to the centre, yea, dripping with the blood of souls. It is not that people do not wish to be saved, that they are lost. It is not that they do not intend to make an effort to secure an interest in Christ and heaven. It is not that they have no serious resolves at some day to close in with the

offers of the Gospel. But it is because they are perpetually putting off, and putting off, to some more convenient season. They do not act with promptness. Though they see and feel the necessities in the case, they hesitate and delay, from month to month, and from year to year, and fail at last because they never could settle upon the time to make the decisive move. It was the remark of an old ecclesiastic, that "hell is paved with good resolutions." The great matter is to act promptly, to do at once what our hands find to do, to seize upon our opportunities without postponement or delay. Now—*Now*—Now,—is the watchword of the Scriptures. The *now* of each moment as it passes, is God's time; and his will is that we should make it *our* time, and "sit down quickly" to the work. To-morrow may come, but it may find our eyes closed in death. Another day may come, but it may find the Saviour weeping over us for not having known the things that belong to our peace ere the door of mercy closed. A third day may come, but it may behold us trembling before the judgment seat, without an Advocate and unforgiven. What we do, we must do quickly.

3. The unjust steward made very efficient use of very transient possessions. The control of his master's estates was in process of passing forever from his hands. But he was wise enough to make them yet tell for his advantage in the beyond. And in allusion to this the Saviour says, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unright-

eousness;" that is, of the deceitful and fleeting riches of this world; "that when ye fail, they may receive you,"—or, ye may be received,—"into everlasting habitations."

There is nothing so fleeting and uncertain as riches. They are here to-day, and to-morrow they may be gone. They are also full of attractions and promises, which captivate and allure, but which are as full of unreality as they are destitute of solid substance. Hence the Saviour describes them as "unrighteous mammon." But fleeting, deceptive, and uncertain as they are, so long as they are in our hands, they may be turned to good account, and made to tell advantageously upon our eternal peace. We cannot buy admission into heaven with money. We caunot purchase eternal life by alms and charities. But we can add to our blessedness with money, and attain to higher rewards in heaven by a right disposition of the possessions of this life. "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord;" and the same shall be returned again with interest. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." And the implication of the Saviour's words is, that even mammon, which is the destruction of so many, may be transmuted into a spiritual friend, to augment our welcome to glory, and increase our promotion in the world of bliss.

We are accountable to God for the use we make of our property, as well as for anything else. Faithlessness or wrong in this, is just as sinful as faithlessness or wrong in anything else. The gold and the silver is the Lord's, and is as much sub-

ject to God's requirements as life and talents. No one is any more bound to serve Jehovah with his hands, or tongue, or intellect, than a rich man is bound to serve Him with his money. We are required to honor the Lord with our substance, as well as with our hearts and lips. Closehanded miserliness, and reckless waste and speculation, are as sinful and incompatible with piety, as profaneness and unbelief. And if a right use of our powers of body and mind contributes to swell the sum of our final rewards, the same must hold true with the right use of our means. Nay, more, the very salvation of many a soul will eventually turn on this very question of a conscientious and religious use of the possessions which God has given. Such was certainly the case with the young man of "large possessions," of whom we read in the Gospel; and the further words of the Saviour assure us, that if we are not faithful in that which is least, that is, in our disposition of worldly mammon, we shall surely fail to have committed to us "the true riches."

How, then, may we dispose of this world's goods so as to make of them friends of eternal advantage? The answer is plain and easy.

The poor we have always with us. And we may so gladden their hearts, and awaken their pious gratitude, by our timely charities, that their prayers and benedictions will follow us into eternity, and bless us forever.

The world is full of the ignorant, and the destitute of the word of salvation, to whom our conse-

crated gifts may serve to carry the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and who may thus become living jewels in the crown of our everlasting rejoicing.

There are manifold channels of good and blessing to the Church and to the world continually open, through which we can make our benefactions flow to deepen and widen the revenues of our eternal glory.

Only let us give ourselves religiously to the work of finding out how we may best employ our means, and be prompt and free in our efforts to strengthen Zion, supply the needy, help the weak, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and further whatever is good according as God hath prospered us, and we shall fulfil the Saviour's command, and make to ourselves friends, both on earth and in heaven, to welcome us at last to the happy choirs of eternity. Thus wealth shall become as wings, not weights; and we shall have successfully imitated the wisdom which is recommended to us by the Master in this day's Gospel. For so saith the inspired Apostle, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

So, then, let us learn from the example of this

dishonest steward. Repudiating his dishonesty, let us adopt his forethought, his energy, his tact. Let us consecrate ourselves, and all we have, and all that we can say or do, to the one, main, and master end, of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. This is our duty and our highest wisdom. And the time will come when our greatest wonder shall be, that any one should have ever so clung to the things of this life, as to have foregone the eternal riches which await the faithful in the world to come.

Blest Saviour, help me by thy grace;
Be Thou my soul's sure hiding-place,
In this my gracious day:
Thy pardoning voice, O let me hear,
To still my unbelieving fear,
Nor let me from Thee stray.

Among Thy saints let me be found,
Whene'er the archangel's trump shall sound,
To see thy smiling face;
Then with Thy saints aloud I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
The riches of Thy grace.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE 19 : 41–48. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

WE have here, not only weeping (ἐδάκρυσεν), but tearful lamentation (ἔκλαυσεν), weeping accompanied with voice and words; and the weeper is the God-man, Christ Jesus. Eternal Deity is not an unfeeling Almightiness. He has a heart, and that heart can be touched, and grieved, and moved with compassion, and stirred with emotions. We may not be able to explain or comprehend it; but it was not only the man, but likewise God in the man, that here expressed himself in tears and lamentations. It is the complaint of abused goodness, the voice of unrequited

love, the accent of Divine pity, taking last leave of the doomed object of the most gracious attentions. Jerusalem, even Jerusalem, is about to be given up to the destroyer, and her children surrendered to the messengers of judgment, because she would not know the things that belonged to her peace, nor the time of her visitation, and a pang goes through the heart of the Son of God, as the sorrow of a parent at the loss of an only son.

But, without stopping to recount the facts and circumstances of the case, I proceed at once to remark upon some of the great and impressive practical lessons which lie imbedded in it, praying God to bless his truth to every one of us.

I. *God intends great things for those to whom He has given his word and ordinances.* He had chosen Jerusalem, and set up his temple there, and made it the centre of his most particular dealings with the elect nation, that it might reflect his glory, show forth his praises, and be the crown and rejoicing of the whole earth.

The thing meant to be reached and made the everlasting possession of its people, is here summed up by the Saviour in the word "*peace*" (εἰρηνη); not mere rest from disturbance and strife; nor yet only health and well-being, as the word often denotes in the Old Testament; but that which is the subject of Divine promise, the highest results of God's mercy and favor, the true Messianic blessing of everlasting freedom from the distresses and

consequences of sin, and exaltation to near and holy relationship with God and heaven.

Glorious things were spoken of Jerusalem as a city, and glorious things of her children. She was chosen to become "the city of the Great King," the metropolis of the earth, and the abiding type of another city, one "not made with hands eternal in the heavens;" and all her children were called to be kings and priests unto God, and co-regents with the illustrious Prince of Peace. But Israel stumbled, and fell, and was broken off, and lost the sublime birthright. The kingdom which was meant for them, was taken from them as a nation, and offered to another people, taken out from among all nations alike, and made up of such as bring forth the fruits of that kingdom. Through the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles; and the diminishing of the chosen nation has become the enrichment of the world. *Now* the Gospel is preached to every creature, and the command is to make disciples of all nations. The high and glorious offers of the kingdom are therefore made without distinction to as many of all the family of man as will receive them. God's word of promise, and ordinances of salvation, and covenant of sublimest "peace," are no longer restricted as once they were, but have been sent forth into all the world, that they might be the possession and imperishable treasure of every one that believeth. There has been constituted another congregation—"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people"—

confined to no one blood, or language, or nationality, but made up out of all peoples, of all such as are "born of water and of the Spirit," and "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." And this Church, for this present at least, is the only true and acknowledged "Mount Sion, and city of the living God," into which all who hear the Gospel are now invited to partake of a heavenly citizenship, and exceeding great and precious promises of joint-heirship with Jesus to a kingdom which cannot be moved. To this end is the Gospel now preached without distinction to Jew and Greek, that upon the same stem from which the carnal Israel was broken off by unbelief, we might be grafted, and share "the root and fatness" of that tree of peace which God hath planted in our world.

Great and high, therefore, as was the calling of the ancient children of Jacob, it was no higher than that which has come to us. And though God may have special purposes yet in reserve for Israel as a distinct people in this world, as respects the heavenly Jerusalem, and the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, there is no dignity, no promise of peace, no nearness to God or participation in his consummated redemption, which is not open and offered as well to each and every one of us, as to any that have lived, or shall live. Great things are meant for us, even the same things of "*peace*," which pertained at first to the ancient Jerusalem.

II. *There is a day or season wherein to know and attend to the things that respect this "peace."* Of very little worth would have been what was spoken to Israel, if time and opportunity had not been allowed to avail themselves of the things upon which the promised peace depended. But, in this regard, there was no lack. When God called Abraham, he chose a good stock, and planted his vine in a very fruitful hill, and fenced it well, and cleared away all hindrances to its growth, and made every arrangement for the most exalted fruitfulness. His challenge through Isaiah was, "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard: What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" Is. 5: 1–4. If ever a people on earth were favored with great opportunities, the Israelites were that people; for unto them pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever." Rom. 9: 4–5. They were that vineyard of the Divine Householder's most tender care, who sent to them his servants, the prophets, and last of all his only Son. They had a day of privilege, and opportunity, and ever-growing light, beyond all other people, that they might secure to themselves an unspeakable peace.

And unto us have their forfeited privileges now descended. This is our day, beaming with all the

light and blessings which once belonged to the Jews, only marked by an easier ritual and a better economy. "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest," and the oppressive and terrifying insignia of Sinai; "but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. 12:18–24. Yea, many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which we see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which we hear, and have not heard them. The cream of all Divine revelations, the marrow of all dispensations, the fruit of all the changing seasons in the grand year of redemption work, the very consummation of the ages, has come unto us. Freedom to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through his flesh, is now the birthright of every one of us. Nor is there a blessing in the promises, an honor in the kingdom, a place at the right hand of Jesus, a joy of heaven to which man may aspire, but it is open and offered to us with all the means, graces, and opportunities for making it our everlasting possession. The very wagons of God wait

at our doors to carry us to the city of rest, and the ships of salvation lie anchored at our docks to bear us to the celestial shores, and the voices of Jehovah's messengers from without and from within are calling to us: "Come, for all things are now ready." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

III. *The day of grace has its boundaries, over which God's saving mercies do not follow those who misimprove them.* Jerusalem failed to know the things that belonged to her peace when they came to her; she failed to perceive when the time of her visitation occurred; and presently there was no more place for repentance, and her golden opportunity was gone forever. Her King came, but she would not have him; and God took his offers back, and left her to perish unhelped. And so our opportunities are only for a limited time. There was a Jewish age (αιων) which ended in judgment, and the cutting off of those who failed to improve it; and so this present age (αιων) must also end. As Jesus came riding into Jerusalem, and pronounced her opportunity gone; so he will come one of these days or nights, riding on the clouds of heaven, to terminate the offers now preached to us in his name. There will then be no more place for another soul in the Church of the firstborn; for the times of the Gentiles will also have been fulfilled. From the call of Abraham to the crucifixion of Christ, the Divine proposal to the Jews as a nation stood open, but then ceased; so

from the ascension of Christ to his coming a second time, the existing proposals to men under the Gospel continue, but no longer.

The present offers of God, however, respect men only as individuals. They accordingly have a much narrower limit. No one's day of grace is any longer now than the length of his earthly life. There was no day of grace for us before we were born, and there is no day of grace for us after we are dead. Such a day is therefore confined to the period of our earthly life.

The same is still further limited, on the one side by the lateness of the period in life at which the Gospel comes to a man, and on the other by the failure of the faculties necessary to handle and use it. There is as yet no day of grace for one who has never known the Gospel, and there is no longer any day of grace for one who has lost his reason, or become incapable of moral action.

It is also quite possible for one's day of grace to terminate while yet both reason and life continue. There may be a loss of the external means and opportunities of salvation, or such a separation from them, as forever to prevent our reaching it. And where there has been long and persistent resistance of grace, habitual suppression of religious convictions and feelings, wilful refusal to fulfil known duty, and persevering withstanding of the influences and impulses of the Spirit of God, there is not only a possibility, but great danger of bringing on a state of callous indifference, and incapacitation which puts the offender beyond the

reach of salvation. There is an unpardonable sin, a malignant stifling of the Spirit, and fighting away of duty and conviction, for which there is no forgiveness. Not, indeed, because the blood of Jesus is inadequate to cover it, but because it gives to the perpetrator an impulse and momentum in the direction of antagonism to God and truth, which renders him incapable of being arrested in his downward course. Such a one is lost even while he lives. He is past feeling, given over, judicially blinded; and his day of grace is forever ended. Nay, to every one there comes, at one time or another, a crisis—a final turning-point—a season, day, hour, or minute, which decides the matter once for all and forever. People may repeatedly dismiss duty and the offers of God, and not be greatly disadvantaged. Another time may determine them the other way. But there eventually comes one such dismission which settles the question beyond subsequent alteration or possibility of retraction. It may differ in no respect from what was many a time done before, and yet carry one across the line from beyond which there is no return, and over which the powers of salvation never pass. Both reason and revelation concur in the support of the startling proposition. Jerusalem may so resist the claims of her Saviour King, that her doom is sealed, while yet she lives on quite unconscious of what has occurred. And so it may be with us and is with many. They live among us and move about our streets; but are as certainly and irremediably lost as if they were

already in hell. Their day of grace is over, and they know it not.

IV. *The termination of the day of grace, without having secured the blessing for which it was intended, is an awful calamity.* In the case of Jerusalem it brought tears and lamentations from the Son of God. "When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!"

These were not the tears of a mere patriot anticipating calamity to his country, nor the tears of an earthly economist over the threatened loss of so much property; nor the tears of an artist over the destruction of so much architectural beauty; but the tears of the Lord over the self-destruction of his own chosen people and city by the rejection of their Divine and proper King.

Here were two thousand years of special culture, costing the blood of so many holy prophets, the ministry of so many anointed priests and kings, the putting forth from heaven of so many works of wonder, and the very incarnation, labors, and sufferings of the Son of God himself, all turned to none effect as regarded its primary intent, and the whole scheme forever exploded as related to the Hebrew nationality! Here was a people, segregated from all other peoples, God's own priestly nation amid earth's tribes, under long heavenly discipline for a national exaltation and instrumentality of blessing to mankind, beyond all mortal

comprehension, suddenly prostrated by their unbelief to the common level of the Gentiles, their special calling revoked, their superior election nullified, their city doomed, and all their peculiar dignity and blessing brought to desolation! Here was the Holy City, the palace of Jehovah's presence and communications with men, the subject of so many labors, battles, prophecies, promises, songs, and tears, the seat of the noblest of kings and the purest and grandest of worships, its very location selected of old because of the angel that here stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan and stayed the plague of Israel, and its adornments the work of ages, the task of empires, and the embodiment of the sublimest genius of the world, henceforth to be circumvallated and overthrown by the heathen, trodden down by the Gentiles, ploughed with destruction, and her population turned into slaves, a hissing and a byword among the nations! What a fate, as contrasted with what might have been, and with what was really intended! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" How great thy calamity, that thou knewest not the time of thy visitation, and didst not improve thy day! Prophets, and wise men, and scribes, were sent unto thee; and thou didst kill and crucify them, scourge them in thy synagogues, and persecute them from city to city! Jesus thy King would often have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! Therefore on thee hath come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, and thy desolation no

man can fathom or heal! Verily, it was no excessive emotion—no ill-measurement of the facts—no weak superabundance of melting passion—no disproportioned exorbitancy of feeling—that even the Son of God stopped short amid the hosannas that rung about him, to weep and cry out over the greatness of the calamity. It was a world of effort and hope suddenly quenched forever.

And yet, there were many in that fallen nation saved out of the ruin. Having lost their election as related to their nation, they were yet saved as individual believers. There was still a remnant, an election of grace, gathered out of the great rejection, to abide as trophies of the abused visitation. But what remains to modify the case of a Christian who passes his day of grace without making his calling and election sure! Eighteen hundred years of weeping and lamentation has there been over the fall of Jerusalem. Nor is the sorrow over yet. Alas, alas, then, for a soul in ruins! A creature made in the image of God, fitted for God, on its way to God, near to the very kingdom of God, wrecked in the port, and sunk in sight of the golden city! A star of the morning, lit and burnished for celestial shining, stricken from its heavens, and quenched in the blackness of darkness forever! A thing created for immortality, around which the potencies of salvation gathered to bear it to supernal enthronement, throttled on the margin of its inheritance, and dragged to the dread prison-house of devils and the damned, to come forth no more! O the depths,

the depths, the depths! of such a calamity! It makes the very Lord of glory weep.

Consider those tears, then, O man, and learn to fear the judgments of thy God, and the consequences of neglecting and rejecting the mercies of thy Maker. There be those who tell us there is no future hell. Mistaken people! Is it for trifles that the heart of Jesus is thus moved? Is it for things that exist only in the fancy that his great heart is thus wrung? Could mere dreams extort such sympathetic lamentation from the Son of God? See then his grief over Jerusalem, and read therein *thy* doom, if thou shouldst fail to know and improve thy day of visitation.

Consider those tears, thou trifler with sacred things, and thou to whom the duties of piety are insipidness and folly, and learn what a loving God and Saviour thou art setting at naught, what compassionateness and goodness of thy Maker thou art despising, and repent thee of thy guilt and wickedness. If such mercy once turns to judgment, what can succor thee, or shield thy defenceless head!

Consider those tears, O Christian, and see what a sanctuary of affection thou hast in the heart of thy Redeemer, and cling to him with ever renewed devotion. Behold how he loveth thee, and how earnestly he is concerned for thy salvation, and let thy soul rejoice itself in such mercy. Though stripped of all else, and made to yield up thy life for thy faith, count it all joy for the love of such a Saviour.

And let every one in whose ear this Gospel sounds, consider those tears, and learn to bless God that his day of grace is not yet over, and that the way is still open to escape the calamity which could call them forth. That day of visitation is very near its close for some. There may be those to whom this hour's presentations shall be the last, and who, if they again refuse the Saviour's offers, will nevermore feel the motions of grace as they feel them now. Therefore bless God to-day that you are still out of hell, and suffer not another hour to pass without opening your heart fully to the Lord and the incoming of his salvation. O my brother, bethink thee of thy case!

God calling yet! wilt thou not hear?
Earth's pleasures wilt thou still hold dear?
Shall life's swift passing years all fly,
And still thy soul in slumbers lie?

Ah, yield him all. In him confide.
Where but with him doth peace abide?
Break loose, let earthly bonds be riven,
And let thy spirit rise to heaven!

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 18: 9–14. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

THE Bible has been likened to a picture gallery, hung full of portraits of human nature in all phases and relations, from which every one may learn to place and estimate himself. There certainly is not another book which shows so fully and to the life what is in man. It is this that makes the Bible so fresh and inexhaustibly interesting to every student of himself, or of his kind. It is the true mirror of humanity, into which we need only look to see exactly what manner of persons we are and should be.

In the passage now before us, we have two of these portraits, drawn with such simplicity, force, and liveliness, as to demonstrate the presence of a master-hand. We can see the men, observe their

every feature, motion, and expression, hear the tones of their voices, read their inmost feelings, and look through the entire style and character of their lives. Nor would it seem possible for any one to contemplate them, without having each indelibly impressed upon his memory, freighted as they are with evangelic truths, to inform the judgment and direct the life. Let us then draw near to look at them with some particularity, imploring the aid of God's Holy Spirit, that we may not fail to learn the important lessons intended to be taught.

Two personages are introduced: "the one *a Pharisee*, and the other *a publican*." In the one, we behold the wealth, culture, and highest respectability found in Jewish society at that time. For to be an approved Pharisee, was to belong to the most distinguished, honored, and influential class of the community. The very name indicates separation from the vulgar masses, and some claim to good character and repute for intelligence, patriotism, and piety. In the other, we find a representative from the ranks of the ill-favored and the despised. His being "a publican" indicates an office which no respectable Jew would hold, and with which was proverbially connected oppression, dishonesty, and a bad character in general. It denoted as much dishonor, disgrace, and unprincipled degradation on the one side, as the name of "Pharisee" denoted of dignity, weight, and honorable position on the other.

But they were both men, nevertheless; and

both Jews. Both also had religious feelings, acknowledged the same God, temple, and worship, and held the same cardinal opinions in regard to sacred things. And both of them went up to the temple to pray.

Man is naturally a religious being. He will have some kind of God and worship. There is everywhere some sense or conviction of a superior Power, who is entitled to our homage, and whom it is man's business to adore and supplicate. Pharisee or publican, rich or poor, high or low, learned or ignorant, worthy or base, every one feels the need of help, and the ties of responsibility, and the obligations of piety, impelling more or less toward religious duty and life. Nor is there anything more deeply rooted and grounded in human nature, or more profoundly wrought into all the religions on earth, than this matter of prayer. There can be no touching or motion of the religious faculties, but they at once put themselves forth in this form. And the man who is never devotionally impelled, that he may have the favor and approbation of his God, is simply *dead* in all the higher elements of his nature. He can hardly be said to be a man.

But there is a vast difference in the temper, spirit, and manner, in which different persons discharge this acknowledged duty. There always have been two conflicting Gospels in the world—two entirely distinct orders of religious proposals and hopes—two wholly diverse and irreconcilable methods by which men approach God with a view

to the securement of his favor. It is also vitally important that we should be able to distinguish between these methods. They are by no means equally good. Pursuing the one, we must inevitably fail; and only by adopting the other can we ever reach that favor and justification of God without which there is no hope for man. And to exhibit these two in sharp and unmistakable contrast that we may learn the defects of the one and the value of the other, is the design of the Saviour in drawing these pictures. The one method is shown in the case of the Pharisee; the other in the case of the publican. Let us consider them separately.

I. The Method of the Pharisee.

It is natural, at least very common, for men to have a good opinion of themselves; especially when comfortably and respectably situated. It is wonderful, how a few thousand dollars, a little notice from men, and a little position in this or that circle, tends to exalt, magnify, and improve some people in their own eyes. Though it is vulgar and disgusting to flatter themselves with regard to their own consequence; yet, for reasons the most insignificant, they will put the highest value on what they feel, or think, or say, or do, and look down with sovereign hauteur and disdain on those not of their particular clique or coterie. And so it was with this Pharisee. He was of those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." He also carried this

feeling with him into his devotions, and ordered them accordingly.

See with what assumed dignity and self-consequence he enters the house of God. With proud step and uplifted head, he struts in, and looks carefully about for a place suitable for one of his consequence. He will not consent to remain in the crowd of common worshippers, but stands apart by himself, where notice will be attracted, and where he can monopolize it. With an air of lofty sanctimony he looks first at one, and then at another, and then glances toward the door, as if he considered it something of an impertinence that such and such should allow themselves to appear in so sacred a presence. Having finally adjusted his sublime self for the grand business of the occasion, he begins with loud and solid tones to recite his magnificent virtues to the Almighty. He hardly has any use for prayer; for what could a man like him yet lack? Therefore he turns the whole exercise into pretence of thanksgiving, and makes the occasion "a service of praise."

Hear his words. We have already anticipated them, at least what is under them, be the articulations what they may. Aye, just as we expected, and in profoundest accord with his whole temper, the language comes. From the abundance of his heart his mouth speaketh. "*God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*"

Well, here was something to thank God for, if it was really true. It is no small blessing to have

been preserved from great and shameful transgressions, which bring disgrace and punishments upon their perpetrators, even in this life. At each end of our State stands a strong and frowning edifice, with high walls, little windows, and iron gates that seldom are opened. Within those forbidding walls, in close and cheerless cells, locked in from all communication with the world, and tasked and oppressed by many a hardship by day and by night, are robbers, and murderers, and thieves, and unclean and unrighteous people of various sorts, whose crimes have brought them there. They never started for such a place. They never anticipated being landed in such prison-houses. Most of them were just as good and promising in their youth as any of the young people who are now listening to me. There was a time when, if you had told them this would be their fate, they would have been as indignant and resentful as you would be, were I to assure you that the penitentiary will be your home, or the gallows your end. And yet, there they are, poor, comfortless, suffering convicts! By short and easy stages of smaller crimes, light-thinking of sin, and self-confidence against danger and temptation, they finally found themselves buried alive in these tombs, with nothing more to hope or live for on earth. And surely there is cause, deeper and stronger than was felt by this Pharisee, to thank God that he has thus far kept us out of such crimes, and such disgrace and incarceration.

But though we have escaped such scandals and

punishments, there is nothing in this exemption on which to pride ourselves, either before our fellows, or before our God. There is many a man outside of the penitentiary, who passes for respectable, who as much deserves to be there, as any who are there. And though one may not be an extortioner, a defrauder, a thief, a murderer, an adulterer, or a dishonest officeholder, how can that prove him to be a good man, a Christian, or entitled to the favor of God? Men may plume themselves on their morality, their exemplary lives, their regard for their word, and their freedom from all outward vices, and yet be very children of the devil, mere whited sepulchres, beautiful without, but inwardly full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanliness. People may succeed in maintaining an external decency, far above that of many whom they see and know of in the world, and yet, in their hearts, be not one whit better than the worst.

The mistake of this Pharisee was, that he compared his outward life with the lives of disreputable people, and so took to himself the credit of exalted superiority. He should have looked in the other direction. If you would come to a just estimate of your character, look at those better than you, and compare yourself with them; look at those whom God has set for our examples, the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and measure yourself by them; look at the holy ten commandments, and try yourself rigidly by their requirements; and this Pharisaic trust

and pride in your own goodness will melt away like frost before the sun.

But this Pharisee did not rest on mere exemptions. He had something positive on which he leaned. Here was one grand item: "*I fast twice in the week.*" God had not asked so much of this, but he gave it nevertheless. Had he not thus filled out the highest standard that any holy teacher had ever ventured to demand? How could any one require more than this, without asking the giving up of life itself? Yet this had he fulfilled. And then strict and conscientious he was too, in meeting his dues and appointments for the support of religion. "*I give tithes of all that I possess.*" God had not required such a rigid taxation; but he was so good and devoted as to do it of his own accord. Not even the mint, anise, and cummin in his garden would he touch, until a fitting portion of it had first been gathered for God and his sanctuary. Was not this a golden record? Could there have been a man more strict and exalted in these holy matters? Was he not a most admirable saint? And here he was, at the appointed hour, conspicuous among the the most conspicuous, thanking and praising God, with a vim and a dignity unapproachable. Blessed man! What an honor to Abraham to have such a son! What an exaltation to this earth of ours to have upon it such a holy worshipper!

But hold a little. Is there not a dead fly in the apothecary's ointment? The man did, and brought

forward, all this, not so much in God's honor, as his own. With what prominence and frequency he flourishes the big "I!" "*I* thank thee that *I* am not as other men." "*I* fast twice in the week, *I* give tithes of all that *I* possess." The whole utterance contains thirty-three words, of which one refers to God, five are "I's," and the remaining twenty-seven are either commendations of himself, or allusions to others in unfavorable contrast with his own superiority. Self—self—self—in utmost intensity runs through the whole of it. There is not a trace of genuine devotion in the entire piece. There is a marvellous thrusting forward of ego, to which all the references to God, the temple, and other people, are made subservient. There is a marvellous volubility of laudation and praise, but not one word of it in real honor of Jehovah. There is pretence of prayer, but no sense of need expressed, nor a single petition asked. There is a remembrance of his fellow-men, but only to condemn them, to show how infinitely he held himself above them, and to publish the uncharitable contempt which he felt for them. There is a loud rehearsal of pious deeds, and an ostentatious ceremonial compliance, but for no other end than to be heard, seen, admired, and praised of men.

Had this man been the perfect saint he wished to be considered, he would have said, "I love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength, and my neighbor as myself." But such a sentence he

could not utter. It would have clung to his lips. His conscience, enfeebled as it was, would have cut short the words. They would have choked up his throat, being too false for utterance. And yet the man who cannot say out those words clearly and without a flaw or falter, be he never so free from outbreaking sins, so conscientious in his religious duties, or so exalted above the people around him, he is nothing but a miserable sinner. Think of himself what he may, he is head and ears in guilt and condemnation before God; and no efforts, prayers, fastings, tithes, ceremonies, or works of his, can ever bring him out. Like a man in the mire, the more he struggles the deeper he sinks. He may wash his hands, he may submerge himself in pure water, he may array himself in clean linen, he may send his tithes to the storehouse, he may go up to the temple, he may avoid the defiling touch of the crowd, he may stand in the place of saints, he may unroll his list of negative virtues and grand moralities, he may make the impression that he is one of the holiest of men, and he may even believe it himself; but, with the pride, uncharity, conceit, and censoriousness of this Pharisee in his heart, he is nothing more nor less than an offensive culprit, in the estimation of Jehovah, and goes down to his house unjustified and condemned. Nor is there any forgiveness or salvation for him, so long as he continues in such a temper, and gives place to such a spirit.

But I show unto you a more excellent way. We have it in—

II. The Method of the Publican.

Publicans, in the Saviour's time, were those officers who had accepted appointment from the Roman government to collect from the Jews the taxes levied by Cæsar. They were generally a low and unprincipled class of men. Zaccheus was one of them, and he, by his own confession, had been exacting and fraudulent. Being hated and despised because of their office, they did not hesitate to make the most of it, and to avenge themselves on their countrymen by severity and injustice. Hence the name of *Publican* became a synonym for the most detested and detestable of mankind.

And yet, they had souls to be saved; and often showed a greater receptivity for the truth, and a far better condition of heart, than the more honorable and pretentious Pharisees. The truth is, that there is not so much moral difference in men, as their different standings in life would seem to imply. All are depraved, and all are miserable sinners in God's sight. Some may appear to better advantage than others, and keep themselves up in the conventionalities of society; but, by nature and in heart, they are all alike sinful beings. The proud Pharisee, wrapped up in his religious vestments, ceremonies, and will-worship, may have about him the air and show of goodness and saintship, but inwardly he is as bad and even worse than those who lay no claim to virtue or respectability. The difference is, that, in the one case, the evil is cloaked and hypocritically covered; and in

the other it comes out just as it is; whilst those having the least show of goodness are generally the most approachable with the only saving remedies.

It is said of both these men, that they "went up to the temple to pray." But we must not suppose they went together. The Publican would not have dared to adventure companionship with so holy and honorable an Israelite; and the Pharisee would have disdained, above all things, to be caught going to the temple in society with one he so much contemned. The Pharisee went thither with a pomp which agreed with his superior holiness and dignity, and with the air of having the first, if not the only right there. The Publican, on the other hand, understood his position, made neither pretension nor claim, but crept thither as one out of place, driven and constrained by an inward burden of conscious guilt and shame which he knew not how else to get rid of than to go with it direct to God in His own house and there implore the forgiveness which only that God could bestow.

With a heavy heart he stepped within those sacred precincts, looking for no special place, and feeling ill at ease in the presence of the great good people there. He heard the Pharisee's recital, but it was too high and glorious in tone for him to imitate. He had no thanks to offer for not being as other men. His conscience accused him too much for that. He could not plead innocence of extortion, injustice, adultery, and such other forms

of ill-doing and wrong. He had never practiced such fasting, such tithing, such strictness and holiness of living and behavior, as he heard there set forth. He observed himself referred to as a vile person, who could not begin to stand a measurement with the sublime sanctity of that Pharisee, and he accepted it as deserved. Others might be pure and good; but he knew *he* was not. Whether these great ones were all they claimed to be, he would not venture to judge or decide. One thing he was sure of, that *he* was not what he ought to be, and deserved only to be condemned and cast out. He would not even come near. He stood afar off. Neither would he lift up so much as his eyes to heaven. His whole nature was bowed down and oppressed with a sense of his unworthiness and sins. Poor man! bereft of every plea, stripped of every possible dependence in his own works or goodness, he could only smite his guilty breast, and cry the one deep, despairing, soul-agonizing cry: "*God be merciful to me the sinner!*"—not *a* sinner, but (*τῳ ἁμαρτωλῳ*) *the* sinner,—the man chargeable with all the bad things from which the Pharisee claimed to be so free.

Here was quite another temper, spirit, and system, from that which was first considered. There it was religious parade and self-conceit; here it is humble penitence and contrition. There it was heartless arrogance in the name of superior piety; here it is broken-heartedness over sin. There it was false gratitude for excellencies which did not exist; here it is intensest soul-supplication for

mercies to which all claim is acknowledged to be forfeited. There it was a recital of moralities, ceremonial observances, and good deeds, by way of claim to God's favor; here it is the lamentation of an utter emptiness, a plea of guilty misery, without recourse and without hope, but in the unmerited clemency of insulted Heaven. There it was censorious self-righteousness and pious uncharity; here it is the most humble reference of all to God, with but one thought, and that thought unworthiness of anything but condemnation.

I recently met with an account of a prince, the son of a king, who went to a house of correction to see the captives. Meeting there so many people, toiling at their tasks, and hobbling in their chains, his heart was moved with pity, and he resolved to give some of them their liberty. But he must first find out which of them deserved release. To satisfy himself on this point, he went from one to the other, asking each why he was there. According to the answers he got, all were brave, proper, and honorable men; one had simply been unfortunate; another had done no wrong; a third was slandered; a fourth was forced against his will; each pleading innocence, and entreating, on these grounds, to be released. At last he came to a young man, asking, "And what have you done, that has brought you here?" "Gracious sir," answered the man, "I am here because I deserve it. I ran away from my parents; I led an idle and dissolute life; I committed theft and forgery; and it would take an hour to tell all the bad things

I have done. And this is what I justly deserve for my evil deeds." The prince facetiously remarked: "Indeed! and how does it happen that so bad a man ever found his way in among all these virtuous and honorable people? Take off his chains, open the gates, and let him out, lest he corrupt and spoil these good innocent men, who have all been put here without a cause." He meant to say, that this was the only honest-hearted one among them; that the rest had only lied and dissembled; and that people who have no sins to confess, are not fit to have their punishments remitted. "This young man," said he, "confesses his misdeeds; he has humbled himself before God and me; and him alone I deem worthy of his freedom. Therefore, set him at liberty."

And so there has been another and far greater Prince, who has come down into another and far greater prison, anxious to exercise his mighty compassion in setting the captives free. But for the most of them he can do nothing. They are too innocent and good to need his forgiveness. They have no sense of guilty poverty and misery. They suffer, but not for sin. They are out of the reach of Gospel manumission, for they have no crimes to be forgiven. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and they are not conscious of sin. Only those who feel and confess their ill deserts, and ask for mercy as not at all deserving it, can ever get it. Only these deems he worthy to be set at liberty. People who have no sins, have no need of a Saviour. And if

men are not willing to see and confess themselves sinners, the Gospel is not for them.

There is a further idea in the Publican's presentation. Our English version does not so distinctly express it as it stands in the original. He pleads nothing, promises nothing, palliates nothing, excuses nothing; but throws his guilty self into the hands of God. He does not ask for consideration because he is a penitent sinner, a praying sinner, or a reformed sinner; but surrenders himself simply as *the sinner*. As regards his side of the matter, his resources, his powers, he resigns all in absolute despair. But he resigns into God's hands, and prays a prayer which still looks to some propitiation there. It is not a bare, abstract, indefinite mercy that he asks. He uses a word (*ἱλασθητί*) which connects with sacrifice, and denotes a mercy which rests on atonement. More fully rendered it would be: "God make propitiation for me the sinner." Looking to something higher, greater, and more Divine than the propitiating sacrifices of the Jews, as needful for him, and thence grappling after the one only availing propitiation made of God, he casts the die of his destiny on it. Live or perish, he has nothing else, lets go everything else, and here rests his case.

The result is quickly told, and full of joyous consolation to all the sin-wearied and the conscience-stricken. Jesus says, "This man," even this guilty and unmitigated sinner, "went down to his house justified." His method was successful. He went home a forgiven and saved man.

And so must it ever be; "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Behold, then, my friends, and wonder, and learn. Here is the way of life; here is the path to peace; here is the gate of heaven. Mere moralities will not do; for by the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified. The utmost ceremonial exactness will not do; for the Lord will have mercy, and not sacrifice. The piling up of devotional works and doings of our own will not do; for the word is, "in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Even the holiest services in the holiest places, if the heart be not in them, and self be not humbled, and pride be not put off, and uncharity be not expelled, and all idea of our own worth and righteousness be not cast aside, will not do; for only such will God hear, as are of an humble and contrite spirit and tremble at his word. What we need is to know, and feel, and confess that we are *sinners*—great and unmitigated sinners—guilty in heart, if not in deed, of all the sins enumerated in the Decalogue. We need to know, and feel, and confess, that there is no excuse for us, no cloak for our sins, no righteousness in us to be balanced against them, and on our part no possible remedy to turn off the fearful condemnation which they have merited. We need to know, feel, and confess, that in all the round of earthly works, ceremonies, sacrifices, prayers, and intercessions, there is absolutely nothing on which we can rest with

the least shadow of hope, being shut up unto the faith of simple despairing surrender into the hands of God, clinging only to his mercy, and the propitiation which he makes.

When Hugo Grotius was on his deathbed, one of our clergymen was speaking to him one day of the remarkable humility and despairing self-surrender to the propitiatory mercy of God displayed in this picture of the publican. The great man turned himself on his couch, and with suffused eyes replied, "*Brother, I am that publican!*" And to this must we all come. *I* am that publican; *you* are that publican; *we all* are that publican; as regards our guilty helplessness. And if ever we are to be freed from the prison-house of our sins and condemnation, we must be that publican also in the further details of the picture. We are not to leave off going to the temple. We are not to leave off praying. We are not simply to drop our hands and consent to sink without a cry for help. God lives. He is able to save. He hath found a ransom. Despair and surrender we must, as to all competency or worthiness in us; but in our self-despair, we may still throw ourselves into the hands of our Maker, and on his propitiation. And, so doing, with all the guilt that is in us, and all the crimes that cry against us, and all the accusations of conscience or of hell that afflict us, there will be no failure of a ready absolution, or of a full and everlasting justification.

Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, boundless mercy, cries.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Mark 7 : 31–37. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

IT was a sublime eulogium which the people of the coasts of Decapolis pronounced upon the Saviour, as given in the conclusion of this day's Gospel. Most men do nothing well. A few do some things well. But of Christ it is said, "*He hath done all things well.*" What men do well, is only comparatively well done—well as compared with other men, or as compared with their doings in other things, or as judged by a mere human standard; but what Christ does, he does absolutely well;—well in the judgment of the highest wisdom in the universe.

This remark holds good, in whatever aspect he may be contemplated; whether as Creator, in the

works of nature; as Saviour, in the wonders of grace; as sovereign, in the dispensations of providence; as man, in the ordinary walks of life; or as God, manifest in the flesh. We have a *perfect* Saviour, complete in all the elements of the sublimest greatness, and in every particular of his person, his life, and his work. And if at any time, or in anything, there may seem to be deficiency, it is because we do not properly understand him, or because we judge of him by a wrong standard, or from a wrong apprehension of the facts of the case. Be the cavils of short-sighted men what they may, a full and thorough understanding of all the particulars will ever compel the verdict, "*He hath done all things well.*"

The transactions which were the immediate occasion of this eulogium, are given in detail by the Evangelist. There was brought to him a man deficient in some of the ordinary endowments of our nature, and the Saviour instantaneously relieved him of his disabilities, and miraculously supplied to him all that was wanting. Three things present themselves as specially worthy of our attentive consideration.

I. The nature of the miracle.
II. Its attendant circumstances.
III. Its spiritual significance.

"Departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis." Driven away by the

murderous unbelief of the Jews, he had spent some time along the borders of heathenism, on the northwest; and from thence he passed along the mountain solitudes to the borders of heathenism on the northeast. But, whithersoever he went, his reputation for miraculous power accompanied him, and subjects for its exercise were laid in his path. Isaiah had sung of his day, as the time when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;" when "the lame" should "leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." (Is. 35 : 5, 6.) And here, in part, was the literal fulfilment of those prophetic words. "They bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech." It would seem from the record that he had never heard, and hence never spoken. He was, at any rate, tongue-tied and deaf. He could not apply to the Saviour for himself, but had to be brought by others, on whom also he was dependent to have petition made for him. It was a case of disability quite beyond the reach of human skill to relieve. Nevertheless, the compassionate Jesus undertook to cure him, to open the deaf ears, loose the bound tongue, and enable the patient to hear as other men, and to converse at once as if no such privations had ever existed.

We thus have before us one of the most wonderful miracles Christ ever wrought. It was both a physical and a mental miracle at the same time, reaching the mind as well as the organs of the body. It not only conferred the wanting faculties of hearing and pronouncing words, but also sup-

plied an acquaintance with the meaning and use of words. The simple giving of hearing to a deaf man, and the power of articulation to a mute, would still leave him at a loss as to the significations, forms, powers, and uses of any spoken language. There was therefore the additional and higher miracle of an impartation to the mind of at least the ordinary vocabulary and grammar of the language spoken by this man's friends. It was more than the giving of a new limb to one who had been maimed, and was hardly equalled by the recall to life of one dead. It was not only a gift of the power of hearing; but at the same time also of an inner understanding and mastery of words never before heard;—not only the bestowment of the physical capacity to utter speech, but along with it the mental wonder of a mastery of language, imparting instantaneous ability to use it as a means of intelligent and intelligible communication.

We may possess the organs for articulate speech, and yet by no means be able to handle and use a language, the words of which we have never before spoken or heard. Long and laborious discipline of the tongue, and inward efforts of memory, and association of ideas with particular inflections of sound, are still necessary to enable us to employ that language as a medium of communication. Here, however, was the impartation at once of both hearing, and understanding of what was heard,—the gift of corrected organs, and along with that the higher gift of speech itself. It has worthily

been compared to the work of creation. It certainly showed a creative power like unto that which originally gave man understanding, hearing, and speech. It had in it all the elements of creativeness, beneficence, and Divine power, from which we may see something of the majesty and glory which resides in him to whom we are taught to look as our Saviour.

II. *The attendant circumstances* of this miracle are also worthy of our special attention. There is often as much in the mode of a thing, as in the thing itself. Christ's miracles were as varied in manner as in kind. The way in which any one of them was done, is as striking and instructive as the wonder wrought. The peculiarities which accompanied this marvellous display of Divine power, are also not without important significance.

1. The Saviour took the patient "aside from the multitude." Different reasons have been assigned for this abstraction from public view. Some have said, that it was to avoid display. But this cannot be the only reason. The miracles of Christ were for the purpose of showing his Divine power and Messiahship, and of witnessing to the multitude that he was the Son of God and the Saviour of men. A sufficient publicity was also required to avoid the suspicion of false play in these pretended works of wonder. Others find the reason for it in the character of the people in that district. Christ was at the time in the midst of a semi-heathen population, and it is thought that it was necessary

in this particular crisis to avoid a publicity which would too strongly excite the superstition of the Gentiles, and compromise him in the eyes of the Jews. He had acted in a somewhat similar manner in the cure of the blind man of eastern Bethsaida. But a stronger reason may be found in what was necessary to the education of this poor subject of his mercy in true faith and comprehension of the work about to be performed for him. It was not that Jesus wished in any way to conceal what he was about to do, or to keep the manner in which he performed it a secret. That would have been to render the whole thing suspicious. There must have been some other reason. Whenever our Saviour put forth the wonderful virtue that was in him, there was always an underlying aim at the personal instruction and spiritual edification of the persons concerned. And it was only by thus abstracting this man from the crowd, that he could most effectually signify to him the true nature and conditions of grace, and lead him to a right faith in the Worker of the marvellous relief. It must be remembered that looks, gestures, and outward signs, were the only ordinary means of communication with one deaf and dumb. And as every particular in this transaction looked to the education of the subject's faith, it had a reason in the necessities of the case. The man needed to be taught, that he must first of all lend himself to be led by the Saviour; that he must be willing to separate himself from the common crowd of men, and their heathenish

ways; and that he must learn to trust himself to Christ alone. Hence the Saviour "took him aside from the multitude."

2. He "put his fingers into his ears, and spit, and touched his tongue, and looked up to heaven." Something corresponding to this was done in the case of the blind man whose cure is described in the succeeding chapter. It was to teach the patient where his disabilities lay; that he who was dealing with him understood his case; and that it was on those organs that he was now about to show his healing power. As remarked by a great English preacher, "Christ could not speak to him, as was his ordinary wont, and demand from him a confession of faith in his power to heal: the man was deaf, so that no question could be put to him, and he had an impediment in his speech which would have prevented his replying. But he could *see*, and could *feel* what Christ did; and therefore our Lord supplied the place of speech by touching the tongue, and putting his fingers into his ears—for this was virtually saying that he was about to act on those organs. And by looking up to heaven, he imparted to the deaf man the idea that the healing power was to come from above. The whole action was symbolical, and accurately suited to the circumstances of the case. Translate it into words, and what have we but such sayings as these: I have taken thee aside from the multitude, that thou mightest observe and remember who it is to whom thou hast been brought. Thine organs are imperfect: here are members of thy body,

which are useless to the ends for which they were given, and I am about to act on them with a power which shall supply all defects. Yet I would have thee know that this power is but a credential of my having come forth from God, and should produce in thee belief of my prophetical character. Behold, therefore: I lift my eyes unto heaven, whilst I utter the words which shall give thee hearing and speech." (*Melville's Sermons*, II, p. 90.)

3. "And looking up to heaven *he sighed.*" It is natural to men to sigh when they behold affliction and privation. But it is just as natural to be correspondingly full of delight in being able at once to relieve it. Earth knows no higher, purer joy, than the ministration of deliverance to the afflicted. And yet Christ sighed on the very point of relieving this patient. It could not therefore have been from mere sympathy. Coupled as it was with his heavenward gaze, it served to signify to the deaf man that relief must come from heaven, that it could only be obtained by a prayerful looking to the source of all power and grace, and that it would be given just as the soul reposed itself upon the goodness and mercy of him who resides and governs in the skies.

But there was something more in it than this. It was not the only occasion on which the Saviour gave symptoms of inward disturbance in the moment of exercising his miraculous power. He often sighed or groaned in the very act of his wonder-working beneficence. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, even when he came to it with

the purpose and power to recover him to life; and "groaned in spirit and was troubled," even as he bade him come forth from among the dead. He was indeed "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,"—grief so profound, that even the most blessed and joy-giving acts of his life could not avail to relieve the depression and anxiety that was ever upon his soul. He had come into the world for a particular purpose. The curse of its great guilt was to be expiated by him. For this he had left that bright heaven to which his eyes were lifted. For this he felt himself an exile and a pilgrim to the dreadful agonies of Gethsemane and the cross. And this load he ever carried upon his heart his whole life through, with the additional consciousness that, notwithstanding his efforts and sufferings, many would still refuse his grace, and only sink into the deeper condemnation. Every new exercise of his Divine power was another and separate effort in man's behalf with the full knowledge that, with all his pains, his endeavors would nevertheless be wholly fruitless with many in whose behalf he wrought. Looking up to heaven, the source of his power, it was as if he had said: "Yonder is the home of my Father, of cherubim and seraphim. From those high spheres, and from the sublimities of the rightful 'form of God,' I have come hither to help and save these blind and deaf unfortunates. I fain would conduct them to those bright abodes. I am about to work another miracle, and thus to make another effort to induce them to accept me

as their leader and their Lord. But, alas, many will only take occasion from it to blaspheme the more, and to plunge themselves in deeper damnation. I foresee that I shall still be 'despised and rejected of men;' and that my gracious works and sufferings shall only rise up in the judgment to heighten their everlasting condemnation." And with all this upon him, he sighed and was sad even amid the very going forth of his power and grace.

And to this there may have been added the foresight, that the very man he was about to bless, would only pervert his newborn powers to ignoble ends. Nothing can be more disheartening to a benevolent man, than to see his gracious gifts turned against him, and his very beneficence prostituted to the increase of mischief and misery. And if this man was afterwards to be found in the ranks of persecutors, and what was about to be done for him was to fail to soften his heart towards his benefactor, it would have been an additional reason for the burdened hesitation with which the releasing word was spoken. It certainly is with such painful foresight that many of the Saviour's greatest mercies are bestowed. Is he not daily pouring his benefits upon men, the great mass of whom take them as mere matters of course, making for them no grateful returns, and often using them only against their gracious Giver? Oh, to think, what ears he has opened, that refuse to hear his word! What tongues he has loosed and furnished with speech, that have never once consented to speak his praise! And if it once re-

pented God that he had made man, seeing how he perverted his ways, how must it burden and pain the heart of Jesus even now, that his precious gifts are so little appreciated, and so wickedly abused! Consider, ye favored children of men, what solemn and moving thoughts passed through the soul of Christ when he proceeded to give you being, foreseeing as he did how you would misuse it! Could it have been otherwise than with a sigh that he conferred the powers which you have so prostituted, or that he showered upon you the glorious benefits of which you have made so little profit? Look at it, and see whether there may not have been reason here also why he sighed when he gave this man hearing and speech.

At best, there was much danger in the new capacities about to be bestowed. Luther has well observed, that "our beloved Lord knew what an amount of suffering and sorrow is occasioned by tongues and ears. The greatest mischiefs that have afflicted Christianity, have not arisen so much from tyranny, persecution, murder, and pride against the word, as from that small bit of flesh which has its home between the jaws. This it is that does the greatest damage to the kingdom of God." The power of speaking is especially the power of sinning;—the power most difficult to keep within control;—the power whence worlds of iniquity originate. And knowing well what fires of evil are in danger of being kindled by loose tongues and open ears, he sighed to speak the word that set them free.

But, with all the painful risks and dangers that are incurred, it is still better that these powers should be given. Better that there should be many wicked tongues, and mischievous ones, than that there should be none at all. Better that many should make shipwreck of their immortality by reason of their gifts, than that those gifts should never be conferred on any. Better that this man's hearing and speech should be given him, and the beneficence and Divine power of the Saviour attested thereby, even if afterwards perverted to the recipient's ruin, than that what it displayed should have remained unseen and unknown. Hence the word went forth, "EPHPHATHA, that is, *Be opened.*" "And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."

III. *The spiritual significance* of this miracle we cannot now consider at large. Suffice it to say that it tells of the sad estate to which sin has reduced humanity, and the power of Christ's word to restore all.

There are disabilities upon every soul by nature, akin to the deficiencies of him whose ears were deaf, and whose tongue was tied. The man or woman who has never been brought to Christ, has no ear for the sweet music of the Gospel, and no tongue for the praises of God. Everything preaches to them of heaven, and of the way thither; but they do not hear. Everything calls upon them and urges them to open their mouths, and confess unto the Lord; but never an intelligible word of

good or faith issues from their lips. Like the man in the text, they are deaf, and they are dumb. Like him, they have not yet come to any right self-consciousness. They do not so much as realize their own situation, so as to think of applying for relief, until some one with better sensibilities takes hold upon them, and leads them to the Saviour. They mingle with the crowd in our churches, and gaze upon the scenes about them there; but it is nothing more to them than a dumbshow. They inwardly hear nothing, and they spiritually take no part in the blessed utterances. They do not even know how dead they are to the higher world of communion in which they move. What they need is to be brought to the Saviour, that he may put his fingers in their ears, and touch their tongues with moisture from his own, and speak his almighty *Ephphatha* upon them. But he can open their ears, and loose their tongues, and plant holy speech in their understandings. His simple word can do it. Thousands have heard that Ephphatha, and had their tongues loosed in glorious confession and holy song. And it is the office of the Gospel to keep on speaking it into the dull ears of men, till the number of God's saints is complete, and all the earth shall hear.

It is well also to have in mind the fact that this blessed Healer is now among us also. Every Bible tells of him; every pulpit proclaims him; and everywhere around us we hear of the wonderful cures he is working for souls that apply to him. To-day again, and in the lesson of this morn-

ing, the cry is reiterated in our ears, "He hath done all things well." And with all our ailment he is acquainted. He is looking upon each of us at this moment with an expression that says, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" *Ephphatha* he stands ready to speak into every deaf ear, and to every bound tongue. And all that any poor afflicted spirits need to be made glad forever in his wonder-working beneficence, is, to turn aside with him from the multitude, to let him touch them with his sacraments, to witness his sighs and sufferings for our sins, and to let sink into their souls his renewing word, which is able to open all their locked spiritual senses, and to make them wise unto salvation.

He can, indeed, help anywhere; he can unstop the ear, and loose the tongue, on the highway, in the hurry of the crowd, or in the secrecy of retirement; he can do it without sacraments and without spittle; but he loves the solitude, and these are means which ordinarily go along with his manner of letting forth his recovering grace. If we would prove his wonder-working mercy, it is but just that we should attest our wish by going aside from the multitude, detaching ourselves from a world that lieth in the wicked one, breaking away from the company of the profane, the gay, and the unbelieving, and walking obediently whither soever he would take us. Then may we expect to feel the pressure of his fingers upon our ears, and to taste upon our tongues the moisture of his own, and to experience the restoring and transforming

power of his *Ephphatha* careering through all our nature, opening our ears to celestial converse, and loosing our tongues to everlasting praises.

But this Ephphatha is also sublimely prophetic. It tells of the ultimate consummation of Christ's mediatorial work. It is symptomatic of what his finished interference in the world's behalf shall be. To every true member of his Church, and to all the disordered system of things around us, this word is yet to be spoken. To all the disabilities that are suffered from connection with the flesh; to the graves that hold the sleeping saints in their bosoms; to all the strings and ties which now bind down this lower creation; he is yet to come forth and say EPHPHATHA! and eternal freedom and peace shall be the inheritance of the earth forever.

God be thanked for the Saviour he has given us! And may he also keep us all in true faith, until bonds and disabilities shall be no more!

Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost need it soundeth.
Our kind and great Deliverer, He,
Who soon shall set all Israel free.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE 10 : 25–37. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

TWO characters are brought to view in this Gospel, each with its own excellencies and defects; the one, "a certain lawyer;" and the other, "a certain Samaritan." The good described is not all on the

side of the Samaritan; and the deficiencies indicated are not all on the side of the lawyer. The lawyer had important elements which were wanting in the Samaritan, and the Samaritan had important qualities which the lawyer lacked. And it is only by supplementing the excellencies of the one with the virtues of the other, that we reach the complete Christian model, which it is our business to copy, and which it was the object of the Saviour, and of the Holy Ghost in recording these particulars, to set before us for our study and imitation.

Let us look, first, at the case of the lawyer; then at the case of the Samaritan; and then at some particular applications which may be made of the subject. May God give us grace to apprehend his truth unto the salvation of our souls!

The close connection between the Church and the state, in the old economy, rendered the profession of a lawyer then, very different from what it is among us. It was largely a religious profession. A Jewish lawyer (also sometimes called a scribe), was one versed in the laws of Moses, and charged with the duty of teaching and expounding the same in the synagogues, as well as when privately applied to for instruction upon any point of theology, morals, or civil life. He was rather a preacher and general instructor than a solicitor or advocate. He was thoroughly educated in religious matters, eminent in the Jews' religion, and a prominent officer in the Jewish Church.

This lawyer, therefore, had thus much to com-

mend him, that he was an orthodox Israelite. He is often spoken of as a captious person, who came to Jesus with a cavilling disposition, more anxious to catch and entrap the Saviour, than to be instructed concerning the questions which he asked. But this cannot be made out from the record. He appears rather as a sincere inquirer after truth. There was an extensive conviction among the Jews that Jesus was "a teacher come from God," at least a very wonderful and exalted prophet. This lawyer seems to have shared that conviction. He addressed the Saviour as Rabbi—"Master," and quite as respectfully as did the inquiring Nicodemus. The question he asked, was also the great vital question which most presses upon a man in deep earnestness about his true spiritual interests. He knew that there is such a thing as "eternal life." He knew that man's sublimest possessions lie in that. He knew also that something must be done in order to become partaker of it. And yet he was persuaded that, with all man can do, it is not to be earned or bought, but must come as an *inheritance*. There is not an expression which he dropped, or a hint given concerning him, which is not indicative of deep religious thinking, great moral earnestness, and a general and correct orthodoxy of spiritual ideas.

It is indeed said that "*he tempted*" Christ. This word bears something of an unfavorable sense, but it does not necessarily imply bad motives. It means simply *to try*—to examine—to put to the proof,—

which may be done for good and honest ends, as well as evil ones. It may readily be, that the man was a little prejudiced, that he was not yet exactly prepared to accept the Saviour's utterances as of Divine authority, that he needed to be better satisfied before yielding the credit which he would rather not give. But his mind was sincerely searching for the clear light on this most momentous of subjects, and sufficient impression had been made upon him to lead him to think Christ's claims worthy of a closer and deeper investigation. He therefore resolved to try the Saviour's knowledge, capacity, and skill upon the greatest of legal and practical questions. He wished to *sound* him. The word here rendered "*tempt*," is the same employed where Christ is said to have asked Philip a question "to *prove* him," John 6 : 6; where we are commanded to "*examine*" ourselves, 2 Cor. 13 : 5; where Abraham's faith is said to have been "*tried*" by the requirement to offer up Isaac, Heb. 11 : 17; where the angel of the church of Ephesus is said to have "*tried* them which say they are apostles and are not," Rev. 2 : 2; and where the coming judgments of God are said to be "to *try* them that dwell upon the earth," Rev. 3 : 10.

So far, then, from arguing a sinister design from the occurrence of this word here, I construe it with other elements of the narrative, and find in it the expression of a quality of real value, and one, the lack of which is a great defect with men in relation to the claims of Christianity. The principal reason why we have so many skeptics and unbelievers in

the world is, that they will not investigate and honestly go to work to test the real merits of Christ and his religion. They are diligent and candid enough in pressing their inquiries and experiments in other directions. They are ready to investigate and try every science, and spare no pains to reach solid and satisfactory conclusions on every other topic. But on the subject of Christ and his Gospel they have no heart for research, no zeal for candid and thorough examination, no earnest enthusiasm to ascertain and master the facts, in order to dispose of them in a logical, intelligent, and conclusive way. Here ignorance reigns, and prejudice governs, and vague undigested theories are made to take the place of close investigation and sincere personal inquiry and experiment. Did they show the same diligence and candor with reference to Christianity which they display on other subjects, it would be out of the question for them to think and feel as they do with regard to it.

Illustrations of this are abundant, and constantly recurring.

If you have doubts about Christ and the Bible, do not give your consent to rest in them upon mere general feeling, or superficial impressions. Your doubts may be unfounded. Your skepticism may after all be wrong, based upon wrong apprehensions, mistaken assumptions, and illogical conclusions. And the subject is too momentous to be trifled with, the risks too awful to be incurred without the fullest possible endeavors to find out

the truth, the consequences too overwhelming to be assumed without the utmost and soundest assurances that you are right in rejecting Christianity.

We do not ask you to believe without evidence, or to accept religion without solid reasons. We claim that the arguments for the Divine authority of the Bible are ample and perfectly conclusive. We claim that the Messiahship and saving Lordship of Jesus Christ are attested by irrefragable proofs. And what we ask is, that you candidly examine them; that you will try them in the hottest crucible of eternal logic; that you put them to the most thorough test in the power of man. All that we demand is, that you do it with a mind open to conviction, with a sincere intention to ascertain the truth, and with an honest purpose to submit to it when it is reached. And if people are unwilling to do this, it is useless, foolish, and wicked for them to think to excuse their doubts, or to escape responsibility for their unbelief.

I take it, therefore, as an excellent trait in this lawyer, that he determined to come forward and make a thorough trial of the Saviour's claims. Whatever Jewish prejudices may have mingled with it, it was yet an honorable proceeding, and the only proper way of disposing of the matter. Beautifully also did the Saviour entertain his questions. He did not repulse or rebuke them as he did those of the hypocritical Pharisees, whose only aim was to entangle and betray him. He takes for granted that the man was in earnest, that his motives were at least comparatively pure,

and that he had undertaken what was a promising step toward his proper enlightenment and salvation.

Another thing we notice in this lawyer is the accuracy and truthfulness of his knowledge and views of the law. The first and great question he asked was a professional as well as a personal one. It concerned him as an expounder of the law, and as a subject bound by the law. The Saviour took it in both its relations, and referred him to his own divine text-books for its solution. How had the man been reading the Bible, which it was his business to understand and expound? What ideas had he formed to himself of the substance of the law? And surely he had not been reading and studying it in vain. He had penetrated to its deepest heart and spirit. He had reached the same conclusions which the infallible Teacher himself has given as the whole sum of its import, and in about the same words. "He answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." He had reached the exact truth. His views were thoroughly complete and orthodox. There was not the slightest defect in his theory. Jesus "said unto him, *Thou hast answered right.*"

It is a great thing to be orthodox. The commendation of the Saviour is ever with a correct creed. There may be good, amiable, and pious men, who are yet very deficient and erroneous in many of their notions. Goodness of heart may

coexist with heretical ideas in the head. But such cases are exceptions, and, sooner or later, falsehoods in the brain breed errors in the life and taint in the character. There may be orthodoxy of the mind, and yet great heresy of heart and life. But still, a right creed is necessary to a right Christianity. The Saviour's first inquiry is as to the nature of our thinking and ideas about sacred subjects. "*How readest thou?*" in the natural and legitimate order of things, always precedes the direction what to do; and from *that*, all availing doing is to take its course and shape. And it was a hopeful and most important thing in this lawyer, whatever else he lacked, that he was correct and orthodox in his understanding of the law, and the nature of its requirements.

But, there was one great deficiency in his case. Theoretical orthodoxy is not always accompanied with practical righteousness. A man may confess a good creed, and yet lead a very unworthy and sinful life. People may know and approve the law, and yet not keep it. The truths of the faith may be carried in the intellect, and yet the power of them be very feeble in the heart, and exert very little practical effect upon the walk and temper. This is what is called a *dead faith*—which is no faith at all—a mere thing of theory and speculation, not of power and living reality. What God requires is, that we do as we believe, and make the orthodoxy of the head control the activities of the life. Here this lawyer seems to have been wanting. He had asked a right question. He

had started his inquiries in a proper direction. And his confession was accepted as entirely correct. He had "*answered right.*" But he was not righteous. His heart and life had not been brought into correspondence with his knowledge. He was only theoretically, and not yet practically right. Hence the direction of the Saviour, "*This do, and thou shalt live.*" He had found the right road, but what he needed was to travel it—to give God his whole heart, soul, strength and mind, as he held that the law required, and to let his love to God flow out in corresponding love to his fellow-men.

As a Jewish doctor he doubtless shared very largely in the narrow proscriptiveness of his class, filled with pride of place and uncharity toward such as were not of his order, and shunning to acknowledge any bond of sympathy between himself and the Gentiles, or any other than religionists of his own tribe and caste. If so, the Saviour's command to *do this*, necessarily came to him with something of indirect reproach. Nor could he help feeling it to be of this character. The narrative accordingly shows, that he was touched by what Christ said to him. Conscience, which makes cowards of us all, took up the matter, and he began to be uneasy and confused. He could not exactly say that he had kept the law, as he had expounded it; and yet he had too much pride and self-consequence to admit that he was at fault. Feeling in his heart that he was not what he ought to be, he yet thought there was a way of explaining the matter, which would exculpate him. It was not

settled who was his neighbor, or whether the second table of the law, as he had given it, applied in that form to any other than those whom he embraced in his merciful regard. He knew that his fellow-Jews, who believed and thought as he did, were his neighbors, and to them he showed favor and sympathy. But there were those in the land who were neither of his blood nor faith, Samaritans and Gentiles, whom his charity had not embraced, and concerning whom he thought it questionable whether they were entitled to the neighborly sympathy and affection which the law required. Wishing therefore to justify himself against the seeming reproach of the Saviour, he raised this question, and "said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" To this inquiry came the story of "the Good Samaritan," in whose case the Saviour would have us find what was lacking in the Jewish lawyer.

The first thing I notice in regard to this new character is, that he was a heretic as to his faith. He was "a Samaritan." He belonged to a people mostly of foreign blood, and an unauthorized religion. Their origin was principally heathen. Their ancestors were Pagan colonists, whom the King of Assyria sent to populate the lands and towns of the ten tribes, after he had carried them into captivity. Through superstitious fears they had sought and obtained religious instruction from the Jews, accepted the law of Moses, and mingled together the worship of Jehovah and their own idols. After the return from Babylon, the Samari-

tans would have joined themselves with the Jews in one common state and worship; but the Gentile taint of their blood and religion prevented their being received or acknowledged. Hatred and variance, the most extreme and malignant, were thus engendered. The Samaritans proceeded to establish an opposition worship of their own, and built a temple over against the one God had ordained at Jesusalem. They had embraced many of the tenets and ceremonies of the pure Jews, and accepted some of the same sacred books; but their religion was of a spurious sort, indefensible, schismatic, and heretical. Jesus himself distinctly and severely condemned it in the conversation with the woman at the well. "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." John 4: 22. He indeed visited these people, and made disciples among them, as did also his followers after him; but we nowhere meet with any Divine sanction of the religion which they held.

It was, therefore, to the discredit of this man that he was a Samaritan. He was an errorist, and in this respect compares very unfavorably with the Jewish lawyer. It was not his Samaritanism that the Saviour wishes to recommend to us. So far as that is concerned, he is quite miscalled "the *good* Samaritan." His religion was not good. His churchliness was thoroughly defective and reprehensible. It was what neither Jew nor Christian could approve, and what it would be very wrong for us to sanction or to imi-

tate. However "good" he was in his heart, he was all wrong and heterodox in his head.

But there was one thing in him that is good, and this it is that the Saviour wishes to recommend to us. He had human sympathy. He could pity the suffering. His mercy was not restrained by sectional antipathy and religious animosities. Though a Samaritan, he could feel for a suffering Jew, and was ready and prompt to help an unfortunate fellow-man, belong to what tribe, or what class of religionists, he might. *He had love for his neighbor.*

The circumstances of the incident which the Saviour relates had in them everything to hinder and embarrass the demonstrations of kindness which are attributed to this Samaritan. The wounded traveller was indeed an object to excite compassion. He had been suddenly and brutally assaulted in his journey. He was at a distance from friends and home. He had been cruelly beaten, robbed, and stripped. He was entirely helpless, naked, bruised, and next thing to dead. He was alone in a most forbidding region. His own countrymen and religious guides had seen him, but "passed by on the other side," not deigning to render him any comfort or assistance. He was a proper subject for pity to any one who had the least spark of human kindness left.

It was thus that this Samaritan encountered him. But he was far from home, and evidently on urgent business. It was a frowning and dangerous place. There was reason to be apprehensive that, unless

he hurried on, he would share the same fate. He was in the country of a people who despised and hated him, and from whom he could expect no favors if any mishap should befall him. And the sufferer was a Jew—one whom he by education was taught to regard with aversion, and from whom nothing was to be hoped for his pains and attentions. To rise above all these considerations required an impulse of no ordinary strength, and a stretch of generosity and kindness not common to men. Nevertheless, he did rise above them. Unmoved by fear, or self-interest, or resentment, or worldly prudence, or misguided zeal, he went to the sufferer, dismounted in the midst of the mountain and the danger, dressed the sufferer's wounds, gave him the benefit of what he had provided for his own journey, conveyed him to a place of safety and shelter, stayed with him and attended upon him over the night, and on the morrow gave the innkeeper two pieces of silver to pay for the robbed man's lodging, and gave charge for every needful attention to him, agreeing to settle for whatever it might cost when he came back from whither he was going.

Could there now be any doubt as to who had played the neighbor, and exemplified the true spirit of the law toward this unfortunate stranger? The lawyer had none. He who had done this merciful deed was unmistakably the true neighbor. "Then said Jesus unto him, *Go and do thou likewise.*" It was the Samaritan's mercy that needed to be added to the lawyer's orthodoxy, in order to

a full and acceptable piety. The lawyer lacked in one, and the Samaritan lacked in the other; but, between the two, there was a finished and glorious model of virtue and excellence. Orthodoxy without humanity is worthless; humanity with heterodoxy is better as regards the comfort of this world; but *orthodoxy with humanity*—a pure worship with universal charity—fills out the complete picture of what the law requires, and what practical Christianity really is. And this lesson of merciful charity is one which we all need to learn much more practically than we ever yet have done.

It is the constant tendency of poor human nature to run the purest religion into cold orthodoxy and dead formalities—into a religion of mere creeds and ritualistic ceremonies, from which the spirit of life, love, mercy, and good-will has departed. And there is, on the other hand, a mere humanitarianism which readily links itself with all forms of heresy and unbelief, against which we also need to be on our guard. But the great inculcation of this morning's lesson is, to see to it that our zeal for the Lord and his true worship does not degenerate into narrow bigotry, selfish exclusiveness, and heartless uncharity. We are bound to be jealous and zealous for the faith; but we must have more regard for man than for sect, and contemplate suffering humanity, neither from Gerizim nor from Mt. Zion, but from the lowly vale where man meets man as his own flesh and blood, and deals with him, whether Samaritan or

Jew, according to the impulses of mercy, sympathy, and love. Our affection is not to be measured by sect, or to stop to be first informed as to whether those in need are of our party and kin. It is to be like the beneficence of God, who causes his sun to shine and his rains to fall on the just and on the unjust.

Who, then, is that man, robbed, stripped, wounded, and dying, to whom our sympathies, kind offices, and charities are due? Who is thy neighbor?

First of all, it is our poor fallen race. Ever since the world began, man, as such, has had his back towards the city of God, going down, down, down, toward the city of the curse and the place of judgment and destruction. Murderers and robbers have assailed, plundered, and wounded him, till his life-blood flows from every pore. The priest with his rites, and ceremonies, and sacrifices, has passed him by unhelped. The Levite, with his learning and his songs, has come and gone without affording him any relief. Humanity still lies in its wreck and ruin. What have you done to stanch its wounds and ease its sufferings? Think of the Samaritan of the text, and "*Go, and do thou likewise.*"

Again, that suffering man is the Church of Jesus. Once and again it has foolishly essayed to leave its glorious mount to go down to Jericho, and thus fallen among thieves, which stripped it of its raiment, and wounded it, and departed, leaving it half dead. And what but this is its condition

now, especially that portion of it which we call our own? How has it been rifled, and impoverished, despoiled, and torn! How do its wounds gape and bleed, with faintness in all its limbs, and sickness at heart as if ready to die! How prostrate its noble form, and weakened its precious life, and disabled in its manly voice and energy! Oh, our poor, mangled, suffering Church, in all this western world—how she mourns, and groans, and pleads for help! And what hast thou done for her? Hast thou played the priest and Levite, who came and looked, but passed by on the other side? Not so has the Church treated thee. She has been to thee a friend, and promises ever to be. She took thee when a little babe, and marked thee with the seal and sacrament of God, and introduced thee even in thy infancy into the fold and kingdom of grace and salvation. She called thee when wide wandering away from thy Father's house in danger and in sin. She drew thee to her gracious side, and taught thee when thou wast ignorant and blind. She has given thee place among her sons and daughters, and made thee heir to all her blessed inheritance. And when those eyes of thine grow dim with sickness or with age, and thy limbs tremble with feebleness on the margin of the grave, she has engaged to stand by thee with her heavenly consolations, to lay thy body down with solemn care into the chamber of the dead, and to come betimes to drop her tears upon thy grave. Oh, she has been a good friend to thee! She has given thee all thy precious hopes

of heaven, and promises of a life of rest when the struggles and toils of this world are over. She has made thy parents the pious guardians they have been to thee, and is training thy children to the same honorable usefulness. She has made thy home the place of beauty and comfort that it is, breathed the peace and security which encompass thy dwelling, and tempered the laws and government which thou feelest only in their blessings.

Hast thou, then, no heart of tenderness for her in her necessities and misfortunes—no sympathies to bestow—no kind services to render—no time to appropriate—no courage to encounter danger for her—no pieces of silver to give to pay her charges in her weakness and destitution? Oh, think of the good Samaritan, and "*Go, and do thou likewise.*"

Finally, this sufferer who appeals to thee for help and grace, is every distressed, bereaved, disabled, destitute, and needy man, woman, and child within thy knowledge. Jew, Gentile, Samaritan, believer, or unbeliever, he is bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh. He is thy neighbor, whose interests thou art to take to heart, and whose protector and helper thou art bound by the law of God and humanity to be, according to the necessities of the case and the extent of thy ability.

Whene'er thou meet'st a human form
Less favored than thy own,
Remember 'tis thy neighbor worm,
Thy brother, or thy son.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 17 : 11–19.—And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

THREE impressive and instructive pictures are described in this Gospel.

I. A congregation of sufferers, whom affliction influenced to much seeming goodness and piety.

II. A marvellous interference of Divine power and grace for their relief, very unsatisfactorily acknowledged and improved.

III. An instance of lonely gratitude, resulting in most precious blessings superadded to the miraculous cure.

To these, I therefore invite your attention, praying God to aid us in our contemplations.

I.

Ten men appear in view. They stand afar off. They are all companions in tribulation, but completely excluded from all companionship with society in general. They at once excite our sympathy, and awaken our deepest commiseration. If ever there was a horrible affliction of the human body on earth, it is fully developed leprosy. No one who has encountered it, as it still exists in the East, will ever wish to look upon it again. Having seen dozens of sufferers of this class, as they hang about the gates and outskirts of Damascus and Jerusalem, I can testify to the fact that it is too loathsome to be described. A true picture of it would sicken, and drive out of the house, many who are listening to me. Yet, all ten of these men were lepers, accounted as dead to their relatives and friends, and by the laws of Moses entirely excluded from the society and dwellings of other people. With the rest of their sufferings, they were not permitted to come near any one, or to hold intercourse with any but like sufferers with themselves. Hence, wherever lepers are spoken of in the New Testament, they are described as standing afar off. And the worst of the case is, that it is an affliction for life. There is in mere human skill and power no cure for it, nor even temporary relief. It is not a disease of such sort as much to shorten human life. Lepers often live about as long as other people, carrying their loath-

some disease with them all their days, without hope of relief except by death. It is just such an affliction, that there is scarcely a calamity in this world, which a man who understands the matter, would have more reason to deprecate, than to be a "leper."

These ten men were not insensible to the distresses of their situation. They felt their wretchedness. They seemed also to realize that it was from God, and could only be removed by Divine grace and power. They seem to have been remarkably humbled, too, under Jehovah's mighty hand. Nor were they without some degree of faith in Christ. They had heard of him. They had learned of his wonderful works. They did not discredit what was told them of him; and they had confidence in his ability to heal them. They had talked the matter over among themselves, and perhaps undertook a joint mission to put themselves somewhere in the Saviour's way, that they might unitedly apply for his gracious intervention.

They had also settled among themselves the religious and sectional disagreements and animosities which naturally separated them. Affliction has a powerful influence to soften down asperities, and to bring about reconciliations between people who never would be reconciled but for their common griefs. A common calamity will often quite expel the deepest hatred, and make friendship between parties otherwise full of ill-will and mutual antipathy. People will often forget in adversity and judgment, what they will by no means forego in

ordinary times. Let the passengers in a ship be as inimical as they may, and stand at daggers' points in fair weather, when the storm is upon them, and the masts bend before the gale, and the timbers creak, and the hulk swings till the beam-ends touch the sea, and a watery grave threatens to engulf them, they at once forget their quarrels, grasp hand to hand at the pumps, and work together like loving brothers. It was so here. The Jew and the Samaritan have their hatred all sunk and buried in their common affliction; their prejudices and animosities swallowed up in their common grief. They are as brothers. They are united as if there never had been anything to divide or separate them. They also prayed together very humbly and evangelically. They all united in the same petition, and "lifted up their voices," as much of them as their disease had left, in unison of supplication. No merit of their own did they plead, no presents offer, no conditions make. They acknowledged themselves miserable, destitute, helpless, and undeserving. They addressed themselves to the right quarter and in the right way.

It is a beautiful and comforting truth, that there is no depth of suffering, or distance from the pure and the good to which sin may banish men in this world, where they are debarred from carrying their sorrows and griefs in prayer to God. A man may be guilty, leprous, cast out, cut off, given up as irretrievably lost; and yet, if he will, he may call on God for help, and the genuine, hearty,

earnest, and real cry of his soul, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me," will span the whole distance, cross all the depths, and reach the ear that is ever open to the calls of the soul-sick and the disconsolate.

These men asked for *mercy*. They knew and felt that there was guilt and judgment connected with their misery. All suffering is from sin, either directly or indirectly; and there can be no effectual cure of suffering, but in the cancelling and removal of the source whence it springs. In all the wide world, there is not a tear which sin has not drawn, nor a pain which it has not started, nor a sickness or bereavement which it has not caused, nor a grave which it has not dug, nor a wreck of hope or happiness in the universe which it has not occasioned. All right prayers for relief from suffering, must therefore proceed on the assumption that forgiveness and recovery from sin are indispensable to an effectual cure of sorrow. It is useless to be crying out to God to deliver us from bodily ailments, if we are not willing to be separated from our sins. But these men prayed Christ for mercy, as evangelically as one could expect.

These poor suppliants also showed great willingness to obey Christ. He told them what to do, and in their sufferings they at once set themselves to comply with his directions. In this respect they were much beyond Naaman, the leprous Syrian. When the prophet sent him word what to do, he was angry, and quite enraged at the directions which he received. He was not

only loath to do what was commanded, but he was indignant that such humiliating means should be prescribed to him. But whatever mystery or unsatisfactoriness there may have been in what the Saviour bade these lepers, they were satisfied to take it, and to try what would come of it.

The true and final test of faith and genuine humility before God is *obedience*. A man who is not willing to take Christ at his word, and to do what he enjoins, is not in a condition to count on his gracious favor and healing mercy. "Faith must obey the Father's will, as well as trust his grace." And people who count themselves forgiven, and hope for eternal life, without an humble setting of themselves to do what the Lord has commanded, only deceive themselves, and dishonor him in whom they consider that they have put their trust. They forget that "faith without works is dead," and that implicit obedience is one of the conditions of pardon and salvation. But these lepers were willing to obey, and thus put to shame many a one much better informed, and with less reason for hesitation.

So much for the company of sufferers. Let us now look at what was done for them.

II.

First of all, their prayers were heard. Jesus, who knew their condition, entertained their petition, and put them in the way of realizing all that their humble supplication implied.

He did not cure them instantly, as in some

other cases. He always accompanied the impartation of his favors with conditions best calculated to benefit the souls, and test and strengthen the faith of the recipients. Sometimes there were important lessons yet to be learned by the applicant, and exercises of mind and heart to be experienced, to give the miracle its proper spiritual efficiency. Hence, means were used in some cases, and none in others; and some were welcomed and encouraged, and others seemingly repulsed. And in every case it is easy to trace satisfactory reasons for the particular manner in which he treated it.

The variety of the Saviour's methods of dispensing his mercies, is also instructive with reference to the standard to be reached before regarding men as real subjects of grace. The disposition of overzealous people, and of inconsiderate ministers, is to look for one uniform style of experiences, and to insist upon that without any sort of discrimination. This is wrong. God does not deal the same with every one. There is as much variety in grace as in nature. One is convinced and impressed in one way, another in another. One has need of experiences to teach him necessary lessons, which another grasps from the start, as if by a sort of spiritual intuition. With one the whole transaction of conversion is a brief and summary thing, lifting almost instantaneously from the way of transgression to the joyous heights of salvation; with another the process is so gradual and progressive that neither he nor any one else can tell exactly where it began, or when it was

consummated. One is led forward by a straight and direct way, another is led about circuitously through the wilderness, before he is brought to Pisgah's summit, or enabled to realize the beauties of the promised land. No one man's experience, or that of any class of men, is to be set up as a model for another. As every one has his own peculiar face, so each will have his own peculiar features of spiritual experience. With one leper Christ at once puts forth his hand, and touches him, and speaks the absolving word, and the work is done; in another case he sends him on a journey to the priest, or sets him on some mission of obedience, in the doing of which the gracious cure is imperceptibly wrought without word or touch. Each must be ready to trust in God without undertaking to prescribe how he is to feel, or what he is to do. We are not to be disquieted and think, because the thing does not turn out as we thought, that there is nothing in it; or because we do not realize the sort of emotions or instantaneous joys which others speak of, that there is no use of trying, or that the hand of God is not graciously and savingly dealing with us. He knows what we severally need, what to give and what to withhold, and how we each require to be handled in order to our best and most permanent advancement. And our business is to have confidence in him, and to go forward according to his word, whether things are as we expected, or such as we can understand, or not.

In sending these lepers to the priests, Christ

gave them an implied promise that they should be healed. It was also in strict conformity to the law upon the subject: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest: and the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper." Lev. 14: 1–3. The Saviour never came into conflict with any of the arrangements prescribed in the Mosaic rites. In this respect no one could convict him of sin; for he rigidly fulfilled all righteousness. He accordingly pointed these lepers to the Mosaic requirement, deferring the actual impartation of the cure until they were on their way to fulfil this direction. Several important purposes were thus accomplished. He thus indorsed the Divine legation of Moses, and gave a test to the faith and obedience of those who wished his help. Their instant departure would also show the reality and wonderfulness of the miracle, as it excluded the possibility of any inferred collusion with them on the part of Christ, or any combination to discredit it on the part of his enemies. The condition fulfilled, would also preach Christ to the priests, and make them attestators of his miraculous power. There was an eminent propriety and wisdom in it all round, arguing at once the sublime divinity and the gracious meekness of him who wrought the wonder.

"*And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.*" They were perhaps not a little disap-

pointed in the treatment which they received. The order looked like a promise of help, but no help was yet realized. They agreed to go as they were commanded, but it was evidently with some perplexity of feeling, and a good deal of oscillation between hope and doubt—between confidence and unbelief. Why should they go show themselves to the priest, when as yet there were not the least signs or sensations of cleansing? Why undertake a journey which would take them away from the only fountain of help, and render them ridiculous as well as the losers if no cure should come of it? And yet, he who had healed others had bade them go, and was not his word to be trusted, even though there were no sensible manifestations to cheer on to obedience? Thus, then, they went, debating with each other, until presently the husky and almost extinguished voice of one took firmness and solidity as he spake, and the distorted features of another put on their proper expression and proportions, and the swollen joints and limbs of a third suddenly assumed healthfulness, and the skin of a fourth shed all its foul putrescence, and the scabbed flesh of a fifth put on the purity of the flesh of a little child, and a sixth stood still in speechless joy over some lost members mysteriously recovered, and a seventh felt a thrill of fresh life careering through his dull arteries, and an eighth perceived the hard white scales let go their hold upon his suffering body, and every one of the entire ten made the joyous discovery that his leprosy was gone, and his flesh clean and pure as

that of other men. A glorious shower of cleansing and health was suddenly rained into the blood of that company of unclean ones, and every member of it stood forth in the bounding bliss of a recovered life, as pure and sound as it was fresh from the new-creating hand of Jesus.

We would naturally suppose that so marvellous a cure would at once have turned each one about in his path to give the author of it his profoundest acknowledgments and most grateful thanks. Men who had been so forgiving towards each other, and so humble and earnest in their supplications, and so willing to obey when their uncleanness was upon them, we would properly expect to be devoutly mindful of their Benefactor in the hour of their deliverance, and to be as ample in their praises as they were urgent in their prayers. But, alas for this mere adversity religion! If we are to judge of it from these instances, nine-tenths of it is untrustworthy and spurious. If people cannot be humble, and prayerful, and obedient in the sunshine of health and prosperity, there is not much reliance to be placed upon their devotion induced by the clouds of sickness and trouble. Dark-day and sick-bed religion, is apt to be a religion of mere constraint. Take the pressure off, and it is apt to be like the morning cloud and the early dew, which "goeth away." Job served God in the sunshine, and was devout amid the blessings of prosperity; and the devil thought: "Take his earthly comforts away, and he will curse God to his face." But when adversity came, and

stripped him as naked as he came into the world, and smote his body quite as distressingly as any of these lepers were smitten, he continued as steadfast in his faith, and as true in his adherence to his religious principles, as he had been aforetime. Satan was mistaken. Give me a man who has learned to know and fear God in the daytime, and I shall not be much in doubt of him when the night comes. But the piety which takes its existence in times of cloud and darkness, like the growths common to such seasons, is apt to be as speedy in its decline as it is quick and facile in its rise. There are mushrooms in the field of grace, as well as in the field of nature. Only *one* of these ten healed lepers returned to make acknowledgment to the Saviour for the miraculous mercies which they had all so earnestly and humbly implored when their leprosy was upon them.

III.

But another picture presents itself—a picture of lonely thankfulness. "*One* of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." The nine snatched at the blessing, and forgot the Blesser. But one had a Christianity which did not merely lie between him and his afflictions, but in his heart. He could not carry off and enjoy the Saviour's benefactions thoughtless of the dues to him who had wrought for him so great a mercy. He could not be content with the blessing without throwing

himself at the feet of his gracious helper, ready to be his servant forever for the good he had done to him.

And yet this was one seemingly the least promising of the whole party. We are left to infer that the rest were Jews—people instructed in the pure faith, and from whom better things were to have been expected,—but this "was a Samaritan." The best educated are not always the most pious; and many, with the best religious opportunities, fall far below those whom they are prone to despise as errorists, heretics, and heathen. The fairest promises are often the first to come to nought, and the poorest and least esteemed of the flock often turns out to be the best sheep.

This Samaritan improved what grace he had, and acted honestly and justly towards himself and his merciful Deliverer. Not all adversity piety is spurious, though much of it is. This man's afflictions brought him to Jesus in humble prayer for mercy, and in his prosperity he remembered the pit from whence he had been lifted, and the Divine friend who had given the deliverance. He not only prayed the prayer of distress, and obeyed the command through which his cure was to come, but he also had a heart to chant the thanksgivings of salvation, and to lay not only his grateful acknowledgments, but himself also, at the Saviour's feet, to obey whatever other commands his Benefactor might choose to put upon him. There was not only a faith to get the bodily cure, but a faith which brought out a complete and practical dis-

cipleship; an earnest and abiding willingness, in prosperity as well as in adversity, to wear the Saviour's yoke. A Being of such Divine power and goodness he was ready nevermore to leave, but ever to follow and obey, that all the world might see what wonders had been wrought in his unworthy person.

His thankfulness Christ accepted. And as he had been faithful in the prescriptions for his cure, and thus opened his heart and offered his life to the Lord for the mercy he had received, there was spoken to him the higher word of salvation for his soul also. To him that hath shall be given. Faithfulness in the less is the sure road to more exalted trusts.

Perhaps the man thought of becoming one of the body attendants of the Saviour. Perhaps his prostration also meant that he nevermore would leave the presence of his glorious Benefactor. But this is not what the Saviour wanted. It was not for a Samaritan to occupy an apostle's place. The offering was accepted, but the *form* of service, it was not for the disciple to prescribe. He could serve Christ as acceptably and much better in his long-empty home—his long-vacant shop—his long-unoccupied place among his friends. There he could show his gratitude, and testify to the glorious mercy of his Lord, and fulfil a life which should end in heaven, even better than where he proposed to himself to move. And so the Saviour gave him his absolving benediction, and "said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee

whole.' He was not to go *his* way, as the others did, without the direction of his Lord to that effect; neither was he to go *his* way even with his Deliverer, except with his Lord's consent. True faith submits everything to Christ—healthy powers for him to dispose of, as well as uncleannesses and burdens for him to take away. And true faith is well content to serve Christ, and to do his will, in whatever sphere he may indicate or prescribe. The remembrance of his great mercy, and a heart just to him for his wonderful goodness, sweetens, exalts, and glorifies every walk of life into which his word or providence may direct.

Brethren, it was for us also that this Scripture was written. It was meant as a mirror in which to contemplate ourselves. The picture, in its several parts, is one of the world at large, and of ourselves in particular. Who are those ten diseased and leprous men, but all the natural-born children of Adam, all whose hearts pulsate, and all whose veins and arteries flow with corruption and defilement? Who are those ten healed men, delivered from their bodily distresses, but Christendom, or that portion of the world which has come into such relation to Christ as to share in common the merciful benefactions and benign virtues which he has shed over the communities where his Gospel is preached and its influences are inwrought with all the thinking, laws, and institutes of society? And who are those nine ungrateful ones, who take the favors of their gracious Benefactor, and go

away with them, making no fitting acknowledgment to their source? Who, but those people who enjoy the Gospel's blessed influences on their bodies and estates, but make no just returns to the beneficent Author of them? Ten are helped, and comfortable in the good things God has done for them; "*but where are the nine?*" Ah, my friends, am I not addressing some of them to-day? God has been good to you,—given you a body freed from the dreadful ills which some others suffer, a home more or less full of comforts, a country tempered with the spirit of his Gospel, a Church in which you may worship as your conscience impels, without fear or molestation. He has put his saving word into your hands—sent unto you his ministers to expound its doctrines,—spread before you his holy sacraments,—sheltered you from many a danger, healed you of many a sorrow, lifted you out of many a sickness and painful anxiety, followed you with his Spirit into many an ill-chosen path, succored you when human help was vain, and makes your heart pulsate with comfort now as you sit before him in his house;—but, alas, what have you done for him? What returns of grateful acknowledgment have you brought back to the kind Author of all these blessings? When most of you were little babes he took you into his arms, put upon you the cleansing waters of baptism, taught you as you grew into years, and to this hour has never ceased his varied efforts to make you happy for this world and the next. He has had every right to expect of you to come

with your grateful thanksgiving to lay yourselves obediently at his feet. One, here and there, has come; but still his sad question echoes: "*Where are the nine?*" He looks at the communicants around the altar, and gladly ministers to them, happy in those whom he has redeemed; but still the inquiry is: "*Where are the nine?*" He looks upon those who are really serving the Church with all their strength and substance the best they can and know, and cheers them with his blessed promises of great reward in heaven; but over them sounds the saddening question: "*Where are the nine?*" And when the saints are gathered to their rest, amid the jubilations of eternity, there will be multitudes absent who had all the opportunities to be saved, concerning whom the word still shall be: *Where are they?* Alas, *where* are they? And what, O man, O woman, if thou art then among them?

O Jesus, Light of all below!
Thou Fount of life and fire!
Surpassing all the joys we know,
All that we can desire,—

Thee may our tongues forever bless;
Thee may we love alone;
And ever in our lives express
The image of Thine own.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matt. 6 : 24–34. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

OUR Saviour is here speaking of certain hindrances to salvation and to the true peace of believers. There are several such hindrances. One is the love of earthly riches; therefore, he says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth

and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Another is the fear of poverty; hence the command: "Take no thought for—*i. e.*, be not disturbed and distracted about—what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." And in the text he refers to still another, to wit, an overanxious concern about the future, and the necessities it may bring; whence the words: "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

But is it so, that we are to "take *no* thought for the morrow?" Is it a part of the religion of Christ to be totally regardless of futurity, and the wants and emergencies it may bring? This would be contrary at once to our common instincts and interests, and to many of the precepts and exercises which we find elsewhere inculcated. We were made to be forecasting in our thoughts, and to have regard to what is beyond the ever-vanishing present. The traveller looks forward upon the road over which he intends to direct his steps, and cannot help being concerned about what awaits him. The streams that warble by him do not more naturally hurry toward the ocean than his thoughts and sympathies flow into the morrow. He *must* think about it. He cannot help it. He is not a sane man if he does not have regard to the future. More than half his earthly life, and everything of his highest calculations, are there.

His eternity is there, and all his ideal of heaven; and he must think about it, or stultify himself both for this world and the next. The Saviour does not, therefore, mean it absolutely, that we are to have no concern whatever for the morrow. Nay, even so far as respects temporal things, it is not his meaning that our care should never, and in no sense, run over into the future. Self-preservation, and hundreds of Divine precepts, require the contrary. Totally to ignore the morrow, if put into universal practice, would utterly depopulate the earth in a single year. We must look forward to harvest in order to sow, and in summer anticipate winter. Yea, the word is, "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

The idea in the text respects a particular kind of care and anxiety—a "thought for the morrow" which embraces not only proper consideration of the future, but such a thought as fills us with tormenting fears and fretting anxieties; a sort of care for the goods of this world which amounts to a worship of mammon; a concern for the future which unfits for the proper duties and enjoyment of the present. It is a "thought" which stands in opposition to a prayerful and calm trust in God and his good providence. Quickness to discern, and prudence to provide against coming evils and necessities, are not only proper but commendable. We do but tempt God, and not trust in him, if we fail to employ the means and powers which he has

given to guard, and protect, and supply ourselves against coming wants and dangers. But there is such a thing as being *overanxious*,—of doubting the sufficiency of our present knowledge and means of subsistence and preservation,—of being distrustful and despondent, as if He who made us had not adequately foreseen and arranged for all the necessities of that being which He has given.

There are people who are not satisfied with what God has given us to know about the future, but they must needs go off to fortune-tellers, diviners, necromancers, spiritualists, and interpreters of stars and omens, as King Saul went to the witch of Endor to find out something more; and who often take to what is thus imposed upon them with a great deal more interest and concern than to the holy oracles of God. They are all the time on the lookout for signs, dreams, auguries, and mystic interpretations of the commonest occurrences. There are others again who are always in fear and trepidation about what is going to happen, how they will ever get through the world, and how they will arrange matters about their future life. They suffer to-day, and they are in the greater agony to know how they will ever get through to-morrow. They see mountains across their path, and trouble themselves almost to distraction in advance, to divine how they will ever get up and over them. They imagine all kinds of evils to themselves, to their fortunes, to their children, and cannot rest on account of these forebodings. Others again are so bent and intent on

getting a competency, a standing, an influence, a name in the world, that they forget that they are only strangers and sojourners here, and so labor only for the meat that perishes. And still others are fretted and distracted about how it would be with them, and what they would do if certain things would happen them as have happened to others. They are sure they would lose their minds, that they could not live, that they could not stand it; and if they were to get sick, or lose this friend, or become humbled in their circumstances, or happen to die;—oh dear, what a hurricane of anxiety torments and overwhelms them when they think of it! Nor can they at all get it out of their minds. They even talk about being "raving distracted" at times. The world is full of such people, and even Christians are not much freer from it than others.

And it is this particular sort of "thought"—this overanxiety about the morrow—to which the Saviour alludes. The Greek word which he uses to denote it is precisely of this import. It means not simply a reference to the future in the direction and management of our lives, but a restless solicitude, and a perturbed, dissatisfied, and unhappy condition of the mind respecting what may be in reserve for us. What the Saviour rebukes, and seeks to suppress, is an anxious, perplexing, enervating, and disheartening care about what may happen, and how it will be with us and ours, in such and such times and events. Whether it be with regard to the necessaries or the con-

veniences of life, or to the possible dangers and adversities to which we are exposed, the requirement is that we should not torment ourselves about them, or vex and disturb our souls, or suffer ourselves to be driven into despondency or sinful resorts with reference to them. It is in this sense that we are commanded to "take no thought for the morrow," but leave the morrow to take thought for the things of itself.

The Saviour does not put this on the ground that to-morrow will have nothing adverse in it. The future will have its "evil" as well as the past and present. The expression, "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," distinctly implies that every day has its trials, and that days to come are likely to have some greater trials for us than any that we have yet had. Either our morrow will be heaven, or it will have its evil mingled with the good, the same as all other days. Afflictions, pains, sorrows, vexations, disappointments, must come. "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet, let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." It is specially urged upon the young to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, because "evil days" are coming, and years are drawing nigh in which they will say they have no pleasure. And there is special judgment denounced upon those who put far away the evil day. At any rate, death and judgment are in the morrow, and the Saviour would not have us deceive ourselves with the supposition that the future will not have its tempta-

tions, necessities, and distresses, the same as the past, and some of a kind and severity which have not yet been. This is the nature of man in this world, and evils are as inevitable as our existence. But still we are not to distress ourselves about them, or to be overanxious respecting them.

And knowing our infirmities in this respect and tenderly sympathizing with our calamitous condition in this valley of tears, the Saviour condescends to reason with us beyond his wont in other instances. Ordinarily Christ speaks "as one having authority." He is himself the fountain, centre, and subject of truth, and he needs not to give any further reason for his injunctions. But here he takes his seat beside us, and proposes kindly and sympathetically to weigh the matter with us, as a mother would seek to console a distressed child.

One consideration he urges against the care and anxiety spoken of, is that God's greater gifts necessarily involve what is demanded by the lesser emergencies of our lives. Our being at all, is certainly the result of a greater interposition of almighty power and goodness than can by any possibility be required to meet the ordinary wants of that being. Life is more than the means of subsistence, and the body is more than the clothes which cover it. And as he has given us our lives and bodies, we should not suppose that he has not thought far enough to provide these necessaries of our existence as required. Is the infinite God so shortsighted, and so self-contradictory as to create and put into being that for the accidents

and ordinary wants of which he has made no calculation? Has he constructed this wonderful machine of our complex being without knowing how he means to run it? The idea is preposterous, and therefore it is unseemly to vex and alarm ourselves lest to-morrow should come without bringing us anything to eat or anything to wear. We may not know where it is, or how we will get it; but does not God know? And has he given us this being of ours without at the same time forecalculating all its wants? He might as easily have withheld existence from us; but he has seen fit to create us, and in that creation he has pledged and guaranteed that he does not intend to leave us unprovided in the lesser and ordinary needs involved in that creation.

Another consideration he urges is the utter impotence of all fretting about it. No such concern of ours can add a single handbreadth to our lives. The number of our months is determined. So and so long we will live, and have strength from God to live, and no longer. We will grow old in spite of all that we can do to prevent it. We can neither quicken nor retard the speed with which we are approaching eternity. There are certain conditions, indeed, graciously given us of God, by which we may prolong and sweeten our lives, but this perturbed anxiety about it is not one of them. It is utterly powerless of any good. It cannot bring back one tint of youth to the withered cheek, nor add a lustre lost from the dimming eye of increasing years, nor make life one iota better. And

as our fretting cannot add one cubit to our stature, or one span to the length of our lives, it is one of the vainest and most worthless things that can possibly be indulged. Gray hairs will come, pains and aches will come, bereavements and losses will come, death and judgment will come, in spite of all our fretting and vexatious care upon the subject, and therefore we ought not to be perturbed or troubled about it.

He also reminds us that it is heathenish, and a great lack of faith, to be thus overanxious about how we shall meet the demands of the future. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." It is characteristic of them; and it may befit them, in their ignorance of the true God and of what relates to a proper life; but we are not heathen. We have a better light to guide us, and have been born to a superior inheritance. We know what a good, wise, and mighty Sovereign is at the helm of things, and governing all according to the pleasure of his own will. We are persuaded of sublimer portions than food and raiment and mere worldly good. And shall all this superior knowledge and enlightenment work in us no better fruit on this subject than heathenism? Are we worshippers of the only living and true God, and yet have no more confidence and trust in his good providence than pagans? Are we the people who are assured that God is our Father, that he careth for us, that he loves us with more than a parent's affection, and that his covenant is that we shall not want any good thing, and yet behave like

those who are without God and without hope in the world? Where, then, is our religion, our faith, our boast in the glorious Gospel? Well may the Saviour upbraid us with something of impatience as well as pity, and say, "*O ye of little faith!*" We do not at all take in what we profess, we do not half believe what we claim to glory in, we do but play the untaught heathen, by all this fretting and ado about what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed. Shall we call ourselves God's children, and yet act and disturb ourselves as if we had no heavenly Father, or as if he did not know that we have need of all these things? Shame on our profession, that Christian people should suffer their hearts to move on a plane of thinking and disquietude at once so infidel and so heathenish.

But even on the basis of natural reason we should be better taught than to be thus fretted with anxieties. "See," says Luther, "Christ makes the birds our professors, and to our shame a feeble sparrow stands up to preach to us and teach us." "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" The little songster of the wood, when the shades of evening come on, mounts up upon his perch among the branches, closes his eyes peacefully, puts his head under his wing, and is in sweet composure all the night long, though rocked by the winds, surrounded by thick darkness, and knowing not

where he shall find his next day's meal. He clings to his chosen twig and sleeps without misgivings, and wakes in the morning with a song in his mouth—a song of praise to that God who ever upholds him, and never suffers him to fall or to want. And can we not confide in that same God, who is more to us than to the bird, and we more to him than a thousand birds? And "consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Well has Luther said, "If a man, with all his pains and genius, could make but one rose, he would be worthy of an empire." "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you?" Thus, from the ordinary analogies of nature, the Saviour draws lessons to shame and rebuke the unbelief and foolish overanxieties of people who would fain be called the children of God.

Still further does he remind us of the unwisdom of taking trouble on interest. The ills of life are numerous and heavy enough when they come. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" and it is bad policy to be adding to it by anticipation, or fretting about it beforehand.

One of our old practical writers, one mild winter day, saw a parcel of boys make a snowball, rolling it along with great exertion, until it grew too large and heavy for them to move it any further. "See, there," said he, "is an emblem of human cares,

They are little and insignificant, but we magnify them by impatience and unbelief, until they become greater than we can bear. Many a one keeps revolving his trouble in his mind, and all that he accomplishes is the setting up of a sign that children have been at play, whilst he gains nothing but a more confused head and a more sorrowful heart, and renders himself weaker to deal with real burdens by his foolish wasting of his strength with imaginary ones."

And, after all, the assurance is that every day's need shall bring with it the requisite provisions. "The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." When Israel was in the wilderness they never had bread for two days in advance, but each morning as it dawned brought the manna for that one day alone, until the last day of the week came; but then came a double portion, to carry them safely through the Sabbath. And so it is with all the necessities of our journey through life. As the need comes, the supply comes with it; and when the last great necessity arrives, there will be grace sufficient for it also.

> In every condition—in sickness, in health,
> In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth—
> At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
> As our days may demand, so our succor shall be.

This is not only poetry, but it is God's sure promise reiterated by the Saviour in the text. Wherefore, then, should we be uneasy and anxious about the morrow? Only trust in God and let it

alone, and "the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." The ills you are concerned about may never come, and if they come, they will either be much lighter than you think, or God will have his help ready, which will not fail to be sufficient for you.

Finally, the Saviour prescribes an effective remedy for all these overanxieties of men. His word is, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*" There is a sphere in which our most earnest concern is never out of place. In that we may take thought, and apply our energies, and put forth our utmost diligence, without fear of transcending the bounds of the most rigid propriety. There is an empire of grace, whose king is the Almighty, whose prime minister is Jesus, whose subjects and citizens are the children of God, and in which forgiveness, sanctification of the Spirit, life, peace, and blessedness reign eternally. The way of entrance into that realm is by repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The signs and seals of its blessings are baptism and the holy supper. Its outer court is the Church—the earthly assembly of them that believe. And the virtue of it is to translate poor sin-stricken mortals clean out of this world and all its ills into the hope and fruition of a better country,

> Where rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
> And the noontide of glory eternally reigns.

And that kingdom is preached and offered to

us. It is now incipiently on earth, among men, and in men. There is no one so ignorant, or so dull and blind but he may find it, and become a regular citizen of it. But it is a thing to be cared for. Nature will not drift into it of its own accord. It is to be sought. Active exertion and earnest endeavor are required. And it is to be sought for "*first:*" before everything else, and above everything else. It is to be pursued as man's supreme good, which it really is. All energy of soul and spirit are to be set in pursuit of it, and when it is found, to learn, and take in, and put on, ever more and more of it. We are to pray, and labor, and search, and listen, and even agonize, to enter in at the strait and mysterious door which leads into its blessedness. This is our calling, our business, the great object of our existence. What we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on our bodies, are questions of no moment whatever by the side of the great question of finding the kingdom of God and his righteousness. That found, everything is found. That secured, all other supplies are included. That rightly pursued, all other cares will be sunk—utterly swallowed up—and never harass or oppress us again

Here, then, is the true elixir of life.

My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
All shall be well for me:
Each changing future scene
I gladly trust to Thee.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 7 : 11–17. And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is arisen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

THE miracles of Jesus have a threefold character and office. They are testimonies; they are parables; and they are prophecies. They show us the Christ, in his qualities as the Saviour of the world; they illustrate the workings of his grace, in its application to the souls of men; and they foretell and forepledge a glorious consummation of the redemption processes. Nor can we reach their full meaning without considering them in these three aspects. In this threefold light, then, I propose to glance at the miracle which now comes before us,

praying God to aid us by his Holy Spirit to grasp and profit by his blessed word.

I. WHAT ARE WE HERE CERTIFIED CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST?

1. This miracle attests that he was an authorized messenger of God. This was the direct and immediate conviction that it wrought upon those who witnessed it. "There came great fear upon all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us, and, That God hath visited his people." Nor were they mistaken in their conclusion from the premises. No one can recall the dead but by the great power of God. Only he who originally gave life can restore it after it is gone. And as the Almighty gives no such power to men whom he hath not sent, the exercise of that power by Jesus Christ proves that he was sent of God, and that God was with him. It was a distinct reiteration, in another form, of that grand testimony which sounded forth out of heaven at the time of the baptism: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3: 7. It was a certificate, which could come only from the very throne of God, that Jesus is the anointed of God, and that his mission into the world was nothing less than a visitation of God himself.

2. The same forcibly attests the compassionate sympathy of Jesus for human sorrow. True, it was a case of very deep affliction, which he here encountered. It was a case of death, which is

always affecting—the death of a young man, cut down in the flower of his manhood—the death of an only son, which the Scriptures picture as one of the sorest of earthly bereavements. And the chief mourner for this only son was a widow. She had buried her husband, and she was now following her only son to a similar burial. It was a case which might well touch the feelings of any one. But Jesus was a total stranger to the parties. He was not an attendant upon the funeral. He only casually met the sorrowing procession as it came through the gates, bearing the dead man to the grave. Most persons in the same circumstances would hardly have noticed it at all; or, giving to it a moment's attention, would have simply turned away with a sigh, and gone on without a further thought. But when Jesus saw the sad company, he stopped. The wails of that anguished mother moved and stirred him. "And when he saw her, he had compassion on her." Could not something be done to help that crushed spirit? Could he let it pass without some gracious interference to relieve her terrible grief and desolation? Stranger as he was, and inopportune as seemed the time, he would at any rate speak to her. And he did speak—spoke from the fulness of his compassion for her sad case—spoke in tones of gentle calmness—spoke words whose gracious kindness was equalled only by the Divine majesty with which they set this great grief at defiance—words which, in their power to pacify, already anticipated the miracle that followed, and at once began to

pour forth upon that heart-broken woman a tenderness of sympathy and help beyond that of her most loving friends. And as we look on, and hear him speak that compassionate "Weep not," how sublimely we are assured that "we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities!" Jesus can have compassion for those whom he finds in sorrow and bereavement. Our griefs he takes to his own great heart. He wept with Mary at her brother's grave; he pitied the stricken widow of Nain; and he is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever." Though enthroned in heaven, he still looks down in pity on his suffering children, and sends to them his messages of comfort. Rudely as many treat his kindness,

> His heart is made of tenderness;
> His soul o'erflows with love.

3. And he is as mighty as he is good—as able to help as he is ready to pity. It is no easy thing to console and heal a broken heart. This woman had much people with her, whose sympathies were stirred, and who doubtless did all in their power to sustain and comfort her; but all their resources and kindnesses were without avail. It was agreeable to have such attentions; but they could not reach the depth of the trouble. With all their sympathy, and services, and marks of intense feeling, there still lay within that bleeding heart the same leaden and desolating fact, that the dear son was dead, and no human power could relieve that

grief. But Jesus not only relieved it, but entirely removed it. In a mere moment of time he dislodged it, and set a light in that darkened mother's soul, brighter than had ever shone there before. He went at once to the very bottom of the grief, and with a mighty hand cleared it clean away, by the restoration of that dead son to life again. This miracle accordingly shows him possessed of redeeming power, as well as sympathy. He is one who can have compassion on the sorrowing, and at the same time carry his gracious feelings into mighty works of deliverance. And he who can thus unloose the bands of death, is competent for any emergency in human experience, and is "able to save unto the uttermost all them that come to God by him."

Such, then, are the character and the qualities of Jesus, as attested by this miracle. He is a true and unmistakable messenger and prophet of God, sent into the world to be the comforter of the sorrowing and the Saviour from death—a loving, compassionate, sympathizing Saviour, who is touched with the sight of human woe, and who brings to his work the mighty power of God, which is able even to restore the dead. We make no blunder when we so accept and believe in him; for no man could do such miracles if not sent and sanctioned of the Father. Neither need we his mother's intercessions to secure for us his favorable attentions; for his own heart ever throbs with sympathy, and loving readiness to help as we have need.

II. WHAT IS PICTURED TO US IN THIS MIRACLE OF THE WORKINGS OF GRACE?

I have said that it is a parable—a symbolization of spiritual truths by outward facts. What, then, are those truths? Look once more at the particulars, and see.

1. Jesus found this young man dead, and being borne to burial. Life was clean gone, and there existed no power but of God to restore it. And herein is shown the sad and hopeless condition of every one apart from Christ's gracious interposition for our rescue. There is a moral and spiritual death—a death to good, to all hope under the law, and to all activities of right affection—even while the life of the body exists. And under the power of that death sin has brought every member of the race. "*Dead* in trespasses and in sins," is the description of the natural man as given in the sacred word. There is no right life. The eyes, the ears, the spiritual senses, are shut and sealed against all light, or sound, or influence of the holy and the divine. All spiritual warmth and animation have departed, and decomposition and corruption are the only forces that continue in activity. The saddest wails resound on every hand, but they are not heard. The grave of perdition yawns with wide-open mouth but a little way in the distance, but it is not perceived nor suspected. And the sad but unrelenting executors of the law, with unyielding grasp and steady step, are bearing forth the prostrate form to the darkness and corruption

of eternal sepulture, whilst there is not the slightest consciousness of what is transpiring. Dead—dead—dead—is every child of Adam, till Jesus gives him life again.

The help of man in such a case is utterly powerless. If it were a case of mere physical disorder, the great storehouses of nature might perhaps furnish a remedy. If it were a case of mere functional lethargy or error, some stimulant or alterative might chance to be found out by the physician to correct the ailment. Or if it were a case of mere mental aberration, science and a better philosophy might serve to set the matter right. But the case is one of *death;* and no power of man has ever been able to bring the dead to life again! Nor prayers, nor tears, nor calls of agony, nor fasts, nor ceremonies, can serve for such an emergency. We are utterly hopeless without Christ.

2. "*He came.*" There was no going or bearing of the dead man to Christ; but a coming of Jesus to him. The first approaches of grace and salvation are all from the side of a Divine movement toward us. Nor was there ever so much as a thought, wish, prophecy, dream, or remotest conception of Christ, much less any motion toward Christ, on the part of man, which was not first prompted and inspired by him, and his approaches toward us. From first to last, he is ever THE COMING ONE, who comes to us, approaches us, and brings to us whatever of salvation is ever experienced. "*Lo! I come!*" was the announcement

of himself which rung out from the depths of eternity; and that announcement is forever the description of the manner in which all help for the moribund souls of men is obtained. And for all who ever come to the joys of life, hope, and salvation, the word of Jesus to his disciples must stand: "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.*" John 15:16. It is he who goes forth to seek and to save that which was lost.

3. "*And touched the bier.*" Not without veritable contact with the polluted things of earth could spiritual quickening be imparted to its fallen inhabitants. Such touching of the dead, or what pertained to them, was uncleanness to the law; and so Christ's appearance for our recovery to life was "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Rom. 8:3. Nay, he who knew no sin submitted to be "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5:21. Nor was it without actual coming in among all the uncleannesses and disabilities of human life and condition that he gave forth his resuscitating power. He tasted even death.

4. Yet it was by the *Word* that the resuscitation was imparted. "He *said*, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Ordinarily it would have been mockery thus to call to a man putrid in decay. How could that corpse hear? How could those lifeless limbs obey? How could a little sounding breath stir that stagnant blood, or awaken a response in that cold mass of mere dead matter? But "the word of the Lord is quick and powerful."

Heb. 4 : 12. It spoke worlds into being when as yet there was none of them; and it is ever the keen instrument of the Eternal Spirit to pierce whither nothing else can, and to make its own way to the end for which it is sent. All the potency of creatorship and resurrection resides in it, and goes forth through it. And by this it is that dead souls are brought to life again. Christ speaks the word: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead;" the message goes forth through all the gloomy charnel-house of this world; from Jerusalem and Judea the voice resounds through the centuries, over all the countries, into all ears; and that word carries in it the great resurrection power as well as command. People often have a very poor appreciation of the Word. They care not to hear it. Many only despise it. They would sooner listen to anything else than to the preaching of it; and wonder that so much stress should be laid upon it, and upon keeping it pure from all earthly admixtures. They forget that it is the great power of God unto salvation; that it is the ordained and only instrument to convey eternal life to the souls of men; and that except as we receive and are born of it, in its native uncorruptness, we never can know God, nor call upon him, nor live before him. Christ's words are spirit, and they are life.

5. When Christ's word of command reached the consciousness of this dead man, it then devolved upon him to obey it. It was by that word that such consciousness was reawakened. He could

neither inwardly hear, nor outwardly obey of himself. It was all of the power of God, as conveyed by the word spoken, that he could do either. But when that power came, as it always does come where the true word of Christ is, it then became the business of the young man to use that power, and to obey that word. Having heard, he must arise and sit up. Human agency and volition must, after all, co-operate with Divine grace. Though a dead man can neither hear nor do; yet, when the potent word of Jesus breaks through the casements of death, startling the locked senses into consciousness again, he must then exert his own will, and set himself to do as bidden, or relapse into a still deeper death. The man with the palsied arm hanging withered and useless by his side, though fruitless are all his own efforts to raise it, when Jesus commands him to stretch it forth, must make the attempt; and with and in that attempt comes the power to do what is enjoined. And so, with the Gospel sounded in our ears, and made conscious that Christ is calling us, it is our business to endeavor to obey. We are powerless in our own strength, but in the attempt we get the power, and salvation comes.

Thus, then, worketh the grace of Christ, in its applications to the souls of men. The method is simple, but efficacious, and in no other way can we ever have eternal life. He speaks: we hear his word; and hearing it, we must set ourselves to obey.

III. What, now, as to the prophecies and forepledges contained in this miracle?

1. It was a raising of a dead man to life, and so an exhibition of resurrection power. And as all Christ's miracles are but the symptoms in advance of what he is hereafter to enact on a grander scale, we thus have preintimation of a coming resurrection for all. If he could raise one man, he can raise any number of men. To raise *one* requires the power of God; to raise *all* requires no more. When, therefore, the time comes for the consummation of what he begun when on earth, we may confidently count that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead."

Nature seems to point to something of the sort. The root that lies hid and torpid in the earth, when the warming rays of springtime rise upon it, starts into activity, bursts its covering, struggles upwards, and blooms forth the praises of its God. From the cerements of an apparent grave and remains of a dead worm, there comes forth a winged thing, which shines in the sunlight, and floats aloft, as a living flower. The corn of wheat dies in the earth, but in its death sends forth another body for the glorious harvest. But these are only analogies, and give us only dim and imperfect suggestion.

The case before us gives us something more. Here is solid fact — the promise actualized — a resurrection already accomplished—a dead man made alive again,—and hence an earnest and sam-

ple of what can be done. And as Christ has promised to raise us up again at the last day, this miracle gives pledge that the promise can and will be made good. Reason may stagger, and suggest its doubts and difficulties; but here is the earnest and the demonstration by which to fortify our faith and comfort ourselves in the blessed hope. He *has* raised the dead, and he can raise all.

2. It was the making glad of a very sorrowing heart and a very desolate home. Joyous was that mother when she first felt upon her cheek the infant breath of that only son; but it was nothing compared with the gladness which thrilled her as she now got him back alive from death and the grave's mouth. What a transfiguration came over that home, when he who was carried from it a corrupting corpse, returned to it a living and well man! With what new consecration had the hand of Jesus invested it! How did its doorposts, and lintel, and fireside, and rooftop light up and resound with the praises of that compassionate stranger who had so suddenly stripped it of its mourning! What new and blessed inspiration was henceforward found in the morning and evening songs that rose around that family altar! But it was only the prelude of the still greater joy and sublimer consolation which shall crown that day, when from the earth and sea shall spring forth the immortal forms of all the holy dead! The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, when the young world first came into being; how then shall heaven ring with

halleluias, when every hillside and every valley shall teem with the newborn children of immortality!

There have been some grand and glorious occurrences in this world of ours—events which sent their stirring tidings down through the ages, and on which the poet, and orator, and saint have ever dwelt with rapturous enthusiasm—scenes about which the very angels of heaven have gathered with interest and delight;—but when that long-predicted shout of the returning Jesus shall go forth upon the graves and dust of the dead, there shall follow a scene such as never yet has been, which will send a thrill of exultation through all worlds, and the fame and joy of which shall flow on through the ages of ages.

How precious and comforting, therefore, is the Gospel which is brought to us in this morning's lesson! What a glorious Saviour it discloses to us! What a scheme of resurrection from the death of sin it preaches! What scenes of blessed triumph it foretells and forepledges! How great the goodness of the kind Father in heaven to send us such a Helper, such grace, and such prospects! What honor, what glorifying, what loving obedience, what confidence, and what ceaseless devotion, are due him for such condescension and such mercies!

My dear friends, have you learned to appreciate this stupendous benefaction of indulgent heaven? Have you at all apprehended this unspeakable gift? To you is this glorious Saviour preached;

have you embraced him? To you his call to spiritual resurrection has come; have you heard it, and set yourselves to obey it? To you these immortal triumphs and scenes of accomplished blessedness are proposed; have you learned to view them as realities, and to look away from this poor damaged life to them as the great object of your pursuit? Deaths, tears, orphanage, widowhood, funeral processions, graves,—these are the scars and marks of the destroyer of our peace; but Christ has come to reverse the sentence, to heal the grief, to lift up the fallen, to requicken the cold heart, loose the silent tongue, rebuild the desolated home, give beauty for ashes, and gather and train his flock for a glorious migration to a better land. Have you not heard the step of his compassionate approach, his merciful "Weep not," his word of gracious restoration? What could be more kind—more Divine—more blessed? Praise him, then, and glorify his name. Cleave to him and love him forever. What he says to you, believe. What he commands you, do. What he promises, expect and look for. And through all the adversities of time, know this, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8 : 38, 39.

Ours is the victor's laurel,
And ours the golden dower!

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 14 : 1–11. And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched him.

And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?

And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?

And they could not answer him again to these things.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

THERE is a vast amount of false and faulty religion in the world. Even some who would be the most orthodox and exact, are the furthest out of the way. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. 17 : 9. There is nothing over which we so much need to keep

strict and constant guard, as over ourselves. And the more traditional strength we have, the greater is the danger of being deceived by flattering misjudgments.

Here, for example, we behold a set of men, professedly the strictest on earth, with the lineal blood of God's greatest saints flowing in their veins, and in possession of the sublimest spiritual heritage that had ever been accumulated, yet counting it a pious work to withstand the Lord and giver of that heritage, with a malignity and hypocrisy which amazes us. They thought themselves the peculiar children of God, whilst in reality a very "generation of vipers."

But still, Jehovah reigns; and whatever may be the mistakes, deceits, and wickedness of men, the Lord knoweth them that are his. We know how he views things, and what will be the end. The passage before us pictures the character and final outcome of all false zeal and hypocritical religion on the one hand, and of genuine godliness on the other. May God help us to handle it to our profit!

I. *We here behold our Saviour in the social circle.* A distinguished Pharisee had invited him to his house and hospitalities, and he had accepted the invitation. This is a fact not unworthy of our attention. Jesus was not a recluse. He had a kind and social heart. He came to instruct, benefit, and redeem men, and he took pleasure in mingling with them. Whether acquaintances or strangers, he was willing to be present at their

banquets, their weddings, or their assemblies for devotion. Not even the sanctity of the Jewish Sabbath prevented him from going into companies on that day to break bread with them. His manner of life was genial and free. John came "neither eating nor drinking"—an austere man—an Essene—who would have nothing to do with society or the world, except to rebuke it for its sins, and to call it to preparation for impending judgment. But John belonged to another dispensation. His baptism still needed to be followed with baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, who "came eating and drinking." He was holy and harmless—holier even than John; but there was no moroseness in his manner—no harsh austerity in his ministrations—no withdrawing of himself from the ordinary habits of human life. A sullen piety, and an exacting religiousness, fit neither to his spirit nor example. Cynical exclusiveness, separation from the common walks of life, an ungenial standing apart from other men, cannot plead his authority or sanction. He did not refuse to eat even with publicans and sinners, and talked as familiarly with Samaritans as Jews. He did not refuse to sit down to the dinners of Jewish officials, to go under the roofs of Roman centurions, or to communicate with men or women, whatever their standing or estate. Members of the Sanhedrim could visit and converse with him by night or day; mothers could bring their children to him and find him ready to receive and bless; and blind beggars and outcast lepers by the waysides could

command his attention and share his kindnesses. He went with fishermen into their boats, received the crowds that obtruded upon him in his retirement, lodged with people in their homes, reasoned socially with men, and meekly taught inquiring women. He was everywhere and always urbane, approachable, compliant; a true man among men, full of gentleness, grace, and condescension. In this respect, as in so many others, he was a model for all men, and comes before us as a Saviour whom we can love, and feel free to approach. With all his holiness, majesty, and glory, he was a meek and social being, worthy of all admiration and imitation.

II. *We here have a remarkable testimony to Christ's goodness.* There is reason to suspect that his invitation to this Pharisee's house was for no friendly purpose. It had about it the air and pretence of friendship and respect, but it was in reality part of a plot to entrap and injure. The Pharisees, as a class, hated Jesus, and were intent upon bringing him into condemnation; and this man had distinguished friends with him on this occasion, who were no exception. This is proven from what occurred when they all got together in the house. Immediately in front of Christ, and in a manner thrust upon his notice, was "a certain man that had the dropsy." How he got there is to be inferred. He was evidently there not as a friend and guest of the Pharisee, on equality with the rest of the company. There appears no bond of

connection between him and any one else. It was not the place for a sick man to be. We cannot conceive how he should have come there on his own account and motion, or how he could have been invited there on the same terms with the other guests. The most natural inference is, that he was placed there for a purpose known to both host and guests before Jesus was asked to be present. There was a scheme on hand to involve the Saviour in a charge of violating the Sabbath day. Not a word was said, but there was the sick man, right before the Saviour's face, whilst the rest looked at each other, and watched to see what would occur. But they did not deceive the Saviour in the least. He saw at once the meaning of the matter, and "*answering*"—answering to what had not been spoken in words, but embodied in the facts before him—"spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" It was a telling shot, to which they were not in a position to reply. "They held their peace." They held their peace, because to answer would have forestalled their plan, and thwarted their ends. Had they said yes, it would have done away with all opportunity to accuse Jesus; and had they said no, they were in danger of laying themselves open before matters were ripe enough for their purpose. Hence, they only looked at each other, and said nothing. Every circumstance shows that it was a put up thing to get an occasion to accuse and condemn Christ. And yet, the scheme throughout was based upon the one

single belief, that Jesus would not meet that dropsical sufferer without at once healing him. Without this the whole plot was of no account. Upon this, therefore, they reckoned as a certainty. Though so malignant, and intending to construe the gracious deed into a sin against God, they staked their entire plan upon the persuasion that he would do it. Yes, even their hard and bitter hearts were so assured of the Saviour's goodness, that they felt warranted in building on it their plot to ruin him. Sabbath day as it was, their convictions were deep and positive, that he would not pass by the opportunity for exercising his marvellous power to cure the invalid they had stationed before him. And that one incidental fact speaks volumes. It tells of the constant stream of healing power dispensed by the Saviour wheresoever he went. It is, if possible, a brighter testimony than all the instances specifically given in all the Evangelists. As the very cloud that would cover the sun with darkness bears the bow which the more beautifully reflects his glory, so the very wrath and malignity of these designing hypocrites did the more magnificently attest the gracious goodness of our Lord.

Nor did they miscalculate. Knowing full well the nature and intent of the arrangement, and comprehending all the ill use the treacherous watchers around him meant to make of it, he did not flinch from his wont, nor suffer his merciful power to be diverted or constrained. Receiving no answer to his question, he went forward, in the

midst of their guilty silence, took the sick man, healed him, and let him go. Nor can any one ever be mistaken in counting on and trusting to the unfaltering and unfailing goodness and healing power of Jesus Christ.

III. *But how base the cowardice brought before us in the conduct of these men!* To wish to unseat and injure one of whose goodness they were so thoroughly convinced, was in itself a self-contradictory wickedness almost beyond comprehension; but, to undertake to use that very goodness, and their persuasion of its existence, for the accomplishment of that wish, was an astounding piece of business. It is mean and cowardly enough to take advantage of another's weaknesses in order to damage him; but to seek occasion to turn his ascertained and uniform goodness and mercy into a means of working his ruin, betrays a blackness of soul too intense for words to describe. Our indignation boils within us against the satraps of Darius, who, when they could find no other way to humiliate and destroy the holy Daniel, selected his firm devotion to his God as the pivot of a plot to bring him to destruction. And yet, the iniquity and cowardice in that case were tame compared with the sort of procedure adopted by these Pharisees for the overthrow of Jesus.

It is well enough to be zealous for the honor of the laws and institutes of God; but a strange piety is that which cannot allow the healing of a sick man on a Sabbath day, and yet uses its sacred

hours for the execution of hypocritical schemes to fix the brand of hell on infinite goodness, known to them and acknowledged in the very framework of their foul plot. It is quite right to be careful and strict in the observance of Divine commands; but when an act of mercy, which an ox or an ass might claim, is construed into an act of treason against heaven when exercised toward a brother in misfortune, there is in it a subversion of all principles of right. To be so devoted to a law whose essence is love as to make a damning sin out of the exercise of charity toward a suffering kinsman, may be piety for a Pharisee, but under the outward livery pulsates the spirit of the very devil himself. Shame on a zeal that attaches sanctity to such hypocrisy, or honor to such cowardice!

IV. *We here behold the true spirit of the law.* The Sabbath was not ordained for itself and its own sake; nor as a mere arbitrary act of Divine sovereignty; but for the good of the living beings concerned in its observance. "The Sabbath was made for man," for his benefit and advantage, and not to constrain him to his hurt in anything. Even these Pharisaic sticklers had to allow that merciful efforts, even toward their dumb animals, was not alien to its nature and intent. Jesus said to them, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day? And they could not answer him to these things." Not slavery to

the outward letter, but the spirit of earnest *Love*, is the soul and life of genuine obedience to God, and the element in which all his institutes are bathed. Separated from this, they become a harsh tyranny, and an unreasonable burden, and their observance degenerates into profanation and blasphemy. It was an inspired apostle who said: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity"—*love*,—"I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." 1 Cor. 13: 1–3. Love makes heaven, and makes the law, and makes all right obedience. It is the life and meaning of all sacred institutes. And any apprehension, observance, or attempted enforcement of them which contravenes or sets aside *Love*, is not of God, nor approved of him.

What matters it for our acceptance with our Maker, to have Abraham's blood in our veins, and all Sinai's precepts written on our hands or bound on our foreheads, and a reverence for the Scriptures which would lead us to give up life rather than one jot or tittle of them, if the spirit of the Giver of these things be not in our hearts! Not our damage even to the loss of a sheep or a goat; not so much as the unnecessary hurt of a dumb

brute, nor the slightest restraint to humane impulses to help it when in suffering, has the gracious Father in heaven embodied in any of his ordinances, however strict or positive. Otherwise he would but contradict himself. He is Love, and his institutes are Love, and all his law is Love; nor can we ever be in harmony with him without the spirit of Love permeating us through and through. Hence his only begotten Son, the human embodiment and expression of God's own nature, would heal the sick on Sabbath days as well as other days, and fed his body on that day the same as at other times, and gave directions to all men, in all things, and in all days, to be merciful, the same as our Father in heaven is merciful. And hence, a true Christian heart is a compassionate heart, a tender and loving heart, with a zeal to heal men's miseries and save their souls, rather than to enforce rigid laws and outward technicalities, which, though of heaven, savor of hell, and serve the interests of destruction, because divorced from the spirit and intent which gave them being.

V. *We likewise behold from this narrative, that an uncharitable punctiliousness about religious things, is apt to have, as its accompaniment, if not its root, some hidden selfishness and self-consequence.* It is not always so much zeal for God and piety, as something else consciously or unconsciously availing itself of these things. It was not that these Pharisees were such devoted servants of God that a good work, on the day they counted holy, offended

and grieved their pious souls, but that they could not have their way against Christ, nor prevent him from teaching and preaching the truth which failed to flatter their dignity, conceit, and hollow pretensions. Were they not the very embodiment of wisdom and goodness? Were they not the very pink of religious excellency? Did they not fast twice a week, and give tithes of all that they possessed, and keep themselves far apart from all the common herd of men? Were they not regularly seen in the market-place and at the corners of the streets praying such prayers and so many as were never heard till their day and their lips uttered them? And who was this young Galilean, the son of a carpenter, a self-constituted religious pedagogue, going about teaching people things which the Hillels and Gamaliels never knew, and paying no more regard to the most holy Sanhedrim and traditions of the blessed elders, than to heal men of the dropsy, cure disabled women, and allow his disciples to pull ears of wheat and eat them on the sacred Sabbath day! What would all their glorious guild soon come to at this rate! True, this Jesus was a wonderful man. He would heal and cure people whenever he found them in grief and sorrow; and his words were quite as wonderful as his works. Officers had been sent to arrest him, and came back without him, with no explanation but that no man ever spake like this man. All the evidences and marks of "a prophet come from God" he exhibited; this they were obliged to admit. The people heard him gladly and were

eager to follow him. His disciples had more baptizing to do than the disciples of the great Baptizer himself. But then he paid no court to them; and if left to go on, the whole nation would be drawn away from their anointed rulers, Moses would be forgotten, the sacred Talmud and the deliverances of the sainted fathers would be undermined, the grand piety of the holy Rabbis would fall into contempt, and their living sons and successors would be hissed upon the streets! Were the head men of Israel, walking in all the wisdom of their predecessors, to be put down by a mere upstart from the contemptible town of Nazareth! Were they to stand by in quietness, and see all their glory, fame, influence, name, and sanctity thus scattered to the winds! Where was the blood of Abraham, the spirit of Moses, the heroism of David, the zeal of Elias, the soul of the sacred commonwealth, to permit such doings? It was their pride, their self-conceit, their assumed authority and importance that was touched; and this was the spring of their sudden zeal for the law, and the factor of their sublime conservation of its precepts. It was not that they so loved God's appointments, or that they were so devoutly concerned to obey them or have them obeyed; but anxiety for a bludgeon to break the head of him whose pure teachings were undermining their falsehood and tyranny. It was not God, but greed; not righteousness, but honor, place, and dominion; not concern for Moses and the prophets, but for themselves and their own consequence.

Even on the occasion before us, there was a marked concern about honors, and higgling about rank and place. This was the inspiration of their assumed sanctity, and all their superior orthodoxy was only a sham for pride and lust of power. And only too apt is this to be the case in every intolerant and uncharitable ado about the mere "mint, anise, and cummin" of the faith. Only too often it is but the stealing of the livery of heaven to serve the devil in—the superciliousness of the blatant Pharisee making damning sin of the Saviour's holy charity.

VI. *But the end of the whole matter is also here shown us.* Such a spirit has no favor with God, and has nothing good to expect. They that are bidden to a wedding, and at once pretentiously make for the place of honor, and take their station there, will soon find that some more honorable have been bidden, for whom they must vacate. "*For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.*" This is the law of things, sure and certain as the law of gravitation itself, from which there is no escape. The cloak of the hypocritical pretender soon wears out, and then comes nakedness and shame. Where pride goes, destruction follows.

On the other hand, honor and triumph are with the meek and true. They may suffer for awhile, but they always rise at last. The humble Nazarene may meet the cross, but beyond it is his crown. The Christ disowned on earth, is presently enthroned in heaven. And as with the

Head, so with the members. God says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." As the dews of heaven settle in the valleys, and water and refresh the lilies there, but avoid the lifted places and the mountain tops; so does the grace of God come to the humble, and bless the meek, while judgment is upon the proud and lofty. "*For he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"

And that exaltation! Who can commensurate its length, and breadth, and depth, and height! A man who has truly learned to submit himself to God, to know his own worthlessness and misery, to appreciate the damage and disease that is upon him by reason of his sins, to understand his real place in the eye of the holy Law, to humble himself at the foot of the cross, and to let go every other hope and help but Jesus, has imbibed a principle of life which marks him as a child of heaven, a citizen of a supernal realm, and an heir to possessions which tongue cannot tell nor heart conceive. Men in their blindness may account it a meanness to make so little of himself, and to be content with a place so low; but it serves to link him with a greatness which they dream not of, and procures for him a wealth of peace and soul-riches—a joy, a hope, an honor, a relationship, which imparts a consecration to the very ground on which he walks. His name is in the rolls of heaven—in the book of life. The eternal ages look to him as one of their prospective kings. Angels devoutly minister to him as one of the

chosen favorites of the Almighty. And when he comes to the end of his earthly pilgrimage, and the summons reaches him to lay down the earthly house of this tabernacle, the blessed Master gently touches him, and says: "*Friend, Go up higher.*"

Carried then, by heavenly ministries, to the bosom of Abraham, where he is fed and comforted with the joys of Paradise, and made to drink of consolations of which those who despised him on earth in vain petition for but one drop; and there, with his sores all healed, and his tears all gone, and his sad estate reversed, he only rests for a further exaltation, when there shall come to him the silver notes from the trump of God: "*Friend, Go up higher.*"

And then before the throne, seated in heavenly state, wearing his crown of gold, and looking on as the King of glory marks off the tetrarchies and princedoms of eternity, amid the blaze and splendor of the great consummation, comes to him again the voice of him who lives forever: "*Friend, Go up higher.*"

And then, as the mighty years of celestial blessedness and dominion are measured out, and the grand cycles of the ages of ages come round, there comes with each the ever deeper and ever more significant words: "FRIEND, GO UP HIGHER!"

O the exaltation and blessedness of him who hath learned to humble himself! Behold, the kingdom of the heavens is his!

Friends and brethren, shall these presentations be without effect on us? It is impossible to lay

too much stress upon the things that relate to eternity. If we lose our interest there, we lose everything. Our perils are also many and great. Our best wisdom is poor and inadequate. Our very zeal for religion may betray us into condemnation. Not ceremonies, not professions, not prayers, not the most zealous punctiliousness or separatism will answer. These Pharisees had all that, but it did not avail.

> Our flesh and sense must be denied,
> Passion and envy, lust and pride.

We are not required to become monks and nuns, anchorites and hermits. Jesus has set us quite a different model. But we must learn to be distrustful of self; to acknowledge that we are but sinful dust and ashes; to lay down our own ideas and conceits at the feet of Jesus; to see to it that our zeal for God is according to knowledge. Having been bidden to the great wedding of Jesus, we must be most grateful and happy to take any place, however humble, that he may assign us. "For he that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

> Follies and crimes, a countless sum,
> Are crowded in life's little span:
> How ill, alas, does pride become
> That erring, guilty creature, man!
>
> God of my life! Father divine!
> Give me a meek and lowly mind:
> In modest worth, O let me shine,
> And peace in humble virtue find.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATT. 22 : 34–46. **But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.**

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool! If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

THE ministerial life of Jesus was full of conflict and controversy. This was not his fault. It seems to be the inevitable law of things, in this depraved world, that truth and righteousness must contend for every inch of ground which they hold. Christ came as the Prince of peace, and yet he had to fight his way, and most of all with those who ought to have known better. He had been foreannounced by all the prophets, and he asserted his Christhood and Divine Sonship with a strength

and fulness of evidence which it was sin to withstand; but the Jewish leaders, who set themselves up as the representatives of all goodness, sought continually to negative his professions and destroy his influence and claims, when they found they could not use him for their own ends and glorification. They followed him with embittered hearts, they watched him, they laid traps for him, they disputed with him, and exerted all their malignant subtlety to put him to silence, and to rid themselves of his unwelcome demands and teachings. For the most part he acted only on the defensive, but sometimes also on the aggressive, carrying confusion and dismay into the hearts and ranks of his opponents. It is not Christlike always to keep silence, and to suffer zealots and self-constituted leaders to have things all their own way.

In the passage of evangelic narrative now before us, we behold the Saviour in the intensest heat of the strife between him and the inimical Pharisees. We see him first as the object of assault, called to defend himself against a very insidious attempt to criminate him; and then as an aggressor upon the falsities and wickedness of his assailants, stopping their mouths, and driving them off in confusion.

The preceding verses give us an account of the manner in which he silenced the reviling Sadducees. It greatly interested the Pharisees, to see their enemies thus confounded. It was a victory which strengthened their confidence in themselves, and encouraged them, not to accept the great

Teacher who had achieved it, but to believe that it was for them alone to handle and confute his pretensions. They accordingly came together, and matured a plan of attack. Their object was to convict Jesus of blasphemy in claiming to be the Son of God and equal with God. This was the assertion he had made but a short while before (see John 10), and they thought they now had an argument by which to accomplish their wishes.

It was well enough defined in the Scriptures what is the great commandment of the law. The Saviour himself had also several times indicated how thoroughly he agreed with the general understanding in the case. And yet, the expression from him was not precisely in the form in which they could take hold of it as they desired. They therefore put the matter into a shape to suit their purposes, and had one of their learned ones to lay it before him, that they might get the answer on which it was their design to proceed. The exact nature of the question is worthy of notice, as in that lay the whole argument which was meant to be used. They did not ask which is the greatest commandment; for that would imply the existence of other commandments. Their question was: "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Or, what is "*the* commandment," with such qualities of greatness as to be an all-comprehending principle of every commandment? They believed there was such a principle. They also believed that Jesus would admit the existence of such a principle. And upon the acknowledgment of the

absolute unity of the law of God, they intended to argue the absolute unity of the nature of God, to the exclusion of the possibility of his having a Son, or of there being any other that could rightfully claim equality with him, or pretend to participation in his attributes and honors. It was a deep-laid scheme, and seemed to have every element of success. If the Saviour should answer in a way not in accordance with the Scriptures and his previous teachings, of course they would have whereof to accuse and condemn him; and if he should answer as they firmly counted that he would, then they would insist that the demand of all affection, devotion, and obedience for God only, excluded the recognition of another as entitled to like honor.

But the Saviour was not betrayed by their subtlety, nor abashed in the presence of the seeming difficulties by which he was encompassed. He saw through the whole design, and he knew exactly how to meet and confound the treachery. He did not swerve one hair's breadth from what Moses had written, nor from what he had previously said upon the subject. It was true that the law could be summed up into one all-comprehending principle, which is no more and no less than this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Thus had Moses written; thus had he himself constantly affirmed. All Divine precepts are embraced in this one primary and great commandment. But, so far from interposing a

barrier to the admission of his claims, there was deducible from it an image and an intimation of that very relation to God which he claimed, and which they were thinking to prove impossible. Supreme love to God carries in it another precept, of precisely the same nature, and of like dignity and importance with the first, because it lies in the bosom of the first, to wit: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This also had been written by Moses, was embodied in the second table of the law, and could not be denied in a right understanding of the Scriptures.

Here, then, were two commandments after all, the one "like unto" the other, and in essence and dignity one and the same. And as "the great commandment" still had a second "like unto it," because of it, and embraced in it; so the one only God could also have a second—a Son of God—like unto God, because *of* God, and embraced in the same eternal Godhead. As there is in essence one law, so there is in essence one God. But as this one law embraced two grand precepts of like nature and Divine honor, the second an outbirth and manifestation of the first, so also there could be, and was, a Son of God—God of God—of the same Divine nature and dignity with the Father, and just that embodiment of eternal Deity which Jesus professed to be. Thus the whole design of this lawyer was disturbed and confounded. What he proposed as a basis on which to confute the Saviour, was subverted and turned into an argu-

ment against the framers of it. They were checkmated at the very threshold of their subtle game. And if that was all they could urge against the Saviour's claim of Divinity, they must needs stifle it in its very germ, lest they should overwhelm themselves with the very instrument with which they thought to convict him of blasphemy. Their attempt was fairly met, and all their labor was for nought.

But having thus defeated their purpose, the Saviour did not let the matter rest. He followed up the subject, and now took the aggressive, if possible to bring them to a better mind. They had asked him a question, and he had frankly answered it. There was no part of his reply which they were not compelled to admit as right and true. And while they were yet collected around him, he also had a question to ask them, which they in turn were bound to answer as frankly as he had answered.

As Jews, they were expecting the Christ, but they would not believe that Jesus was that Christ. They claimed that the Christ must be a good man, but they wished to make it appear that Jesus was not a good man, in that he professed to be the Son of God, and made himself equal with God. Jesus would therefore have them say whose son they expected the Christ to be, and so asked them the direct question. Nor were they slow to answer, though their reply took in only one side of the Messianic character. They said that the Christ was to be the son of David. This was correct as far as it

went. The Scriptures plainly said so, and no one could dispute it. But this was not all that was written. The Saviour therefore directs their attention to what David himself said of the Christ (Is. 110 : 1), and asks them to explain how David came to "call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." The point he made was: "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" Here, by David's own confession, was a Lordship above David, as well as an admitted sonship from him. And he whom David by inspiration called his Lord, could be none other than God. It was hence evident from the Scriptures, that the Christ the son of David, was likewise the Lord of David, even the Son of God, and partaker of the throne, dominion, and glory of God; which was neither more nor less than Jesus proclaimed himself to be.

Here, then, was a plain Scripture, which no one could deny; and the conclusions from it were equally plain and irresistible; and those conclusions were in exact accordance with those very claims which so incensed these malignant inquisitors. How would they meet the case? How dispose of the facts, or rid themselves of the argument? The inquiry was fair, the facts were patent, and how would they void the conclusion that the Christ of the prophets was exactly what Jesus claimed to be? There was no way of voiding it. The learned lawyer was silent. His mouth was stopped. And so overwhelming was the Saviour's triumph, that no one was able to answer him a

word, or dared from that day forth to ask him any more questions. They thought to convict Jesus of blasphemy, and they convicted themselves of wilful blindness, and of rejection of the Scriptures.

From this narrative, then, we may observe how difficult a thing it is to dispose of Jesus and his claims, without evangelically believing in him. There are various classes of unbelievers, and divers are the methods by which they seek to justify their unbelief. The Pharisees tried it, and the text gives the result. A like embarrassment must attend every other case. Logic is ill at ease with skepticism.

There are some, indeed, who give themselves no thought about the matter. They care nothing for Christ, his Gospel, or his people. They are so engrossed with themselves, their business, their pleasures, and the cares and interests of this world, that questions of religion and theology never find entrance into their hearts. They neither believe in Christ, nor have any opinions concerning him. But, of all behavior towards the subject, this is the most illogical, unmanly, and unjustifiable. It involves such an utter deadness in all the higher and proper elements of manhood—such an obliviousness to the world of inner, spiritual, and external necessities, capabilities and relations of human nature—such a recklessness and disregard of all that makes it worth being a man,—that no language is strong enough to express the grovelling baseness and depravity of such a way of dealing with a matter so momentous and so solemn. It

bears dark condemnation upon its face, and stamps the brand of Cain upon the brow of him who lends himself to it. Jesus *must* be thought about, and earnestly considered, or a man loses his right to be ranked with thinking beings, and takes a place akin to that of the brute. The very devils in perdition are not so low, so deficient, as to have no thought, no mind, no opinion concerning such a being. And it would be better never to have been born, than to spend and end life in a Christian land, amid all that is said, and believed, and preached of Christ, without making up an idea of what to think of him, and how to dispose of him.

There are others, again, who are content to treat the account of Christ as a myth. They do not believe that there ever was such a being, and quiet themselves by denying that he ever lived. But, then, how came there to be such a history? We can easily trace it back through all the records of civilized man to the time and country where the scene is laid. The race of people from whom Christ sprang, who as a body rejected and crucified him, and who to this day hold him in contempt, is still in existence as a distinct people; but never, from then till now, have they denied the main historic facts recorded by the evangelists. Nowhere, in all the mythologies and fictions which human genius has created, is there anything to show that man could have conceived such a story, or such a character as that of Jesus of Nazareth. With more reason and consistency might we doubt that ever there was an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Luther,

or a Napoleon Bonaparte, than to satisfy ourselves with the conclusion that what is written and believed of Christ is without a genuine historic basis. The invention by man of such a history as is contained in the books of the New Testament, its imposition upon the belief of mankind against such mighty and constant antagonisms, and its successes among all nations and in all ages since, would be a miracle more inexplicable upon the common principles which govern in human affairs, than all the alleged facts of the case, as faith embraces them. And though some may persuade themselves that such a being as Jesus never existed, it is a theory which cannot stand a moment's intelligent and candid scrutiny.

But there are still others, who neither ignore Christ, nor deny the evangelic records concerning him, who yet think to dispose of him without submitting to him as a Divine Lord and Saviour. They do not malignantly assail him as the persecuting Jews, but they conceive of him only as a remarkable man, a great reformer, or, perchance, a very holy prophet. Of this class were the Arians of the earlier ages, the Socinians soon after the Reformation, and the Neologians, Rationalists, and so-called Unitarians of more recent times. With these, Jesus was only a more virtuous Socrates, a more exalted Plato, a wiser Confucius, a more disinterested and self-denying servant of his race. The religion of which they make him the author, is only a somewhat reformed heathenism—an improved philosophy—a more loving morality.

They accordingly dwell much upon his ethical instructions and precepts, and talk of sins as vices, and of the benefits of Christianity as the fruits of virtue. With them Christ had no other kind of oneness with God than that which is shared in common by all good and spiritually-minded men. But if Christ was not vastly and divinely more than man ever was, or ever will be, he is not to be named with a Socrates or a Plato. It is an old saying, and as true as old: *Christos, si non Deus, non bonus*—"Christ, if not God, was not good." He was either altogether superhuman, and God as well as man, or he cannot be regarded as that model of goodness which these people take him to have been. He certainly did claim to himself an origin, a perfection, a dignity, a work, and a destiny, which it would be blasphemy for any mere man to claim. He asserted himself to be, not only a prophet like David, but the Lord of David, the Son of God, who was before Abraham, one with the Father, and equal with God. And if he was not what he said he was, it is nonsense and absurdity to believe in him at all.

As the great commandment still has a second, which springs from it, and is of the same essence with it, and is like unto it, and equal with it, though in some sense subordinate; so is Christ the coequal and coeternal Son of God, God of God, and Light of Light. He was the son of David, born of a woman, made under the law, of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh (Rom. 1: 3), but he was at the same time the Lord of David,

copartner with the everlasting Father of the throne and power of God In a word, as we confess with the early Church, he was very God of very God, made incarnate by the Holy Ghost, true humanity and true Divinity, conjoined without confusion in the mystery of one all-perfect and ever adorable Person, who, for us sinners, and for our salvation, came into the world, suffered, died, rose again, and now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, waiting till his enemies shall be made his footstool.

He is the Divine Prophet, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who spake as never man spake, and whose words are spirit and life to every one that believeth.

He is the great High Priest of the Church, whom all previous priesthoods prefigured, whose offering all previous sacrifices foreshadowed, and in whom is forgiveness and everlasting purgation from all the guilt and impurities of sin.

He is the anointed mediatorial King, whose government is to supersede all governments, who occupies the throne for the eternal good of his people, and to whom every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—the Sun of Righteousness—the Dayspring from on high—the Light of the world—the true Vine, of which all saints are branches—the Holy One of God—the tree of Life. Every blessing calls him to mind as the Giver; every deliverance points to

him as the Preserver; every sorrow recalls him as the Comforter; and every sin proclaims him as the Redeemer. He is the Author and Finisher of faith—the Alpha and Omega of all abiding hope—the beginning and the ending of all grace and salvation. He is the heart's crowning Treasure, the Joy of the redeemed, and the everlasting strength of them that are saved.

We look upon the sick, the afflicted, the distressed, and when we would comfort them, we think of him as the great Physician, the Fountain of all consolation. We stand by the bedsides of the dying, and when we would strengthen and encourage them in their departure, we point to him as the Life and the Resurrection. We think of those who have gone from us out of the world, and the only hope we have is, that he is their Keeper, and that with him the pious rest. We believe, and that faith has its centre in Christ. We hope, and that hope rests only on Christ. We sing, and our sublimest songs are those whose subject is Jesus. We wait, and pray, and look for redemption, but it is all connected with the life and coming again of our Lord Jesus. And our hearts, and thoughts, and words, and lives are never so full of blessedness, as when they have in them the most of Jesus. Nor has any one yet solved the greatest, most momentous, and most practical problem of all time, who has not learned so to regard, receive, and rely upon that wonderful man of Nazareth.

To-day then, I come to you with the question:

"*What think ye of Christ?*" Has he a place in your thoughts and philosophy? and what is that place? On this question hang all right estimates of God and his government, and of man and his destiny. A mistake here carries with it a train of consequences dreadful as hell, and lasting as eternity. It is by what we think of Christ that the universe takes its complexion in our eyes, and that the eternal ages shape themselves to us as an ever-greatening curse, or an ever-expanding blessedness. It is as we think of Christ that our whole estate is fixed, and the question settled as to whether we be saints on the way to heavenly glory, or graceless sinners on the way to everlasting death. It is therefore the question above all questions which this day's Gospel propounds: "*What think ye of Christ?*" And what answer does your conscience give?

Perhaps, to this hour, you have never had a serious thought about Christ, or have been thinking very vaguely and erroneously concerning him. If so, what is your mind and purpose for the future? Do you mean to continue in such indifference and mist? Or do you propose to defer attention to the subject, thus returning for answer that you do not think it important at present to settle what to think? May I not ask you then to consider *what is to be thought of you*,—what Christ, who has given himself for you, must think of you; what angels, who could not keep quiet in their thrones when Christ was born, but filled heaven with jubilant songs over his infant couch, must

think of you; what your sainted fathers, who have crossed the flood of death and now rest in the glorious bosom of him whose grace has brought them there, must think of you; what the lost in perdition, who mourn forever their harvest past and their summer ended, must think of you! Ages upon ages travailing in pain to bring forth the preparations for him, and you not care to think of him! The princes of eternity bending from their lofty seats to watch his every step and catch his every word, and you not care to think of him! Demons running with dread from the majesty of his presence, the sea yielding its prompt obedience to his voice, the dead stirring in their graves at his call, the rocks rending with astonishment and the earth trembling on its axles as he suffers, and the universe in breathless awe over the mystery and power of his resurrection, and you not care to think of him! The Living Ones and the glorious Elders in heaven, and myriads of myriads of angels in the depths of space, and thousands of thousands of the holiest and highest of beings fall adoringly at his feet and sing: To him be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion for the ages of the ages! and you not care to think of him! What shall be said of such a creature? Whereunto shall we liken such insensibility?

And what, then, O man, do you suppose Jesus will *do* with you? We know what he is doing now. We know that he is keeping the world in its appointed course that it may not open and

swallow you up in your sins. We know that he is holding back the day of judgment to give you time to repent and fly to the stronghold of refuge and salvation. We know that he is preserving your life, and giving day after day and week after week for you to prepare to meet your God. We know that he is sending to you minister after minister, and message after message, and providence after providence to awaken you to a sense of your folly, and to turn you to a better life. We know that he stands at the door of your hard and bolted heart, where he has already stood these many years, knocking that you may open unto him, and that he may be admitted with all the joys of salvation's eternal festival. We know that he is dealing with you continually with a forbearance and long-suffering which you would never exercise toward any creature that lives. We know that he is calling to you again to-day, in all the sweetness of this holy hour, and with all the persuasiveness of his infinite compassion, beseeching you to come to him, and take his yoke upon you, and learn of him, and find eternal rest. And, after all this, if you still continue in your carelessness and folly, what do you suppose he will do with you?

This life of yours will not endure forever. These worldly comforts and possessions will not abide with you perpetually. Even this world in which you take so much delight must one day end. And when you come to part with earth and earthly good, and those eyes of yours grow dim with age

and set in death, and that heart of yours ceases to beat, and that body of yours goes down to moulder in the grave, and that soul of yours, unwashed, unsanctified, comes to stand face to face with its just and inexorable Judge,—what do you suppose he will do with you?

O my friend and brother, will you not think of these things? Jesus asks you to think of these things, and presents himself as your Lord and Saviour if you will but accept him, and consent to be saved by him. He opens to you the doors of his Church, and bids you come into the ark and find everlasting life! Will you put it all away from you again? God forbid! God forbid! See—

There is a gate that stands ajar,
And, through its portals gleaming,
There comes a radiance from afar,
Hope on lost mortals streaming.
O depths of mercy! Tidings true!
That gate was left ajar for you.

That gate ajar stands free to all,
Who seek through it salvation;
The rich and poor, the great and small
Of every tribe and nation.
O depth of mercy! Tidings true!
That gate was left ajar for you.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matt. 9 : 1–8. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

And he arose, and departed to his house.

But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

IT was in Capernaum that the things here narrated transpired. Jesus had chosen this city as his place of abode, on which account it is called "his own city." On this occasion he had just returned from an excursion to the opposite side of the sea of Galilee, where he had made a marvellous assault upon the dominion of Satan, and showed his glorious power in the healing of a poor demoniac; but the people, preferring their swine and sensual quiet to his holy rule and saving presence, besought him to depart out of their coasts, which he did; for where the saving Christ is not wanted, he will not obtrude and force his mercies. In Capernaum he

was better known, and more appreciated, at least as a worker of healing miracles. His return, therefore, was soon noised abroad, and applicants for his friendly help were not wanting. Among the rest was a poor paralytic, who was carried into his presence with a view to obtain relief by his gracious interference. Perceiving the faith in which the application was made, and seeing the distress of the disabled patient, he at once turned to him and said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." It was more than was asked; and some thought it blasphemy for a man to use such language. But to him the bonds that hold men's souls are no stronger than the disabilities which are upon men's bodies. There is also a very close connection between the two. If there had been no sin, there would be no bodily ailment, no palsy. The Saviour accordingly treated both as belonging together, and sent the sufferer rejoicing to his home, released at once from his paralysis and his sins. It is therefore more especially as the forgiver of sins, that our blessed Lord is here brought to our contemplation. And in this light I pray God for grace to view him, whilst I direct your attention to

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS:

I. *As the great want of man;*
II. *As the peculiar achievement of Christ;*
III. *As the primary offer of the Gospel.*

I. **The forgiveness of sins as the great want of man.**

Sin necessarily presupposes law; for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Law implies the existence of government, and the exercise of authority; for where there is no government, no sovereignty, there can be no law. The government presupposed, is the government of God; and the law implied, is the Law of God. The Author of the universe, is necessarily the *Sovereign* of the universe; and the Maker and Preserver of man is, by necessity, the rightful *Lord* of man. As creatures, we cannot escape dependence upon our Creator; and as moral beings, we must needs be under moral obligations and responsibilities to the Almighty Power who has undoubted right to command us.

God has also sufficiently indicated that he has a will and law concerning us, and what that will or law is. We find it written in our own nature, though not always fully legible to our dull perceptions. We can trace it in a measure from the ordinary course of human experience. It also speaks in those inward instincts and moral judgments which we call conscience. But it is particularly and specifically articulated in the word of Revelation, summed up in what we know as the Ten Commandments, and resolved into its simplest essence in those words of Jesus, which compress all the Law and the prophets into the two grand precepts of supreme love to God, and love to our fellows as to ourselves.

According to this Law, it is the bounden duty and obligation of each one of us, to love the Lord

our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. All the several precepts which God has given, are only specifications or detailed applications in particular relations of these comprehensive principles. And any variation or departure, in heart or life, from this perfect Law, is *sin;* for, as said in our Confession, "everything is sin which varies from the Law of God." It may exist in the form of defect, bias, feeling, or act; but wherever there fails from the heart or life a constant, supreme, and unfaltering love to God and true charity toward all mankind, there is deviation from the Divine standard, and that deviation is sin. It needs not that the deficiency be acted out in the world of external deeds. The Law is spiritual. It looks to the state and condition of the heart, feelings, and thoughts. It notes not only what we say and do, or neglect to say or do, but especially the inward life and temper. In its view, as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. According to the spiritual affections, hidden biases, and secret desires of the interior life, God judges whether we be sinners or not, every instance of deflection from perfect heart-loyalty to him and his will being sufficient for our condemnation.

Law likewise involves penalties. A law without penalties ceases to be law, and degenerates into mere counsel or advice, which one may take or not just as he pleases. Where there is government, there must be a punishing power, and inflictions to be visited upon the unruly and disobedient. God's Law, therefore, to be *Law*, must

have penalties for those who do not keep it. They may not follow immediately upon the occurrence of the offence. There is usually an interval between the perpetration of a crime and the punishment of the offender; but wherever there is sin, the Law has a penalty annexed. And that penalty is *death*. "The wages of sin is death," Rom. 6 : 23. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezek. 18 : 4. An extinction of all the proper enjoyments of our being is inexorably linked with every form and degree of transgression. Upon every sinner there is a condemnation pronounced. Sentence from the throne of God is on him. He may not so much as suspect it, but he is really a convict, only respited a little while till the day of execution arrives. Nor is there any escape for him, so long as that sentence stands. "*Die he, or Justice must.*" And as no mortal man dare pretend for an instant to such an innocence and perfection as never to have wavered in heart or life from the high and holy standard of God's Law, so no mortal man is other than a sinner before God, under condemnation which must undo him forever, if not somehow removed.

How, then, is that sentence to be met? We interrogate Nature on the subject; but, in the unvarying certainty with which all her laws are enforced without falter or exemption, she can tell of nothing else but that we must suffer it. We search through the records of this world's wisdom, but find no solution of the problem. Through all the ages, and through all the earth, has the earnest

cry gone up, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Mic. 6:6, 7. In every land blood has flowed, victims have suffered, holocausts have burned, tortures have been multiplied, and prayers, and penances, and pilgrimages, and painful sacrifices have been made; but all without being able to buy exemption, or to charm away the sense of God's great, certain, overhanging condemnation. With all that the whole race could do, there was not a pin on which the guilty and conscience-stricken children of men could hang a hope of deliverance. The misery of all miseries, the central woe of all woes, the concentrated torment of all torments, was this curse of God, gone out over the whole family of man, appalling even the proudest, flashing terror into the hardest, and filling the whole world with an unconsolable anguish ever greatening as men grew nearer to eternity, while eternity itself had nothing to offer their guilty souls but the blackness of darkness forever. The one want of all wants, was *The Forgiveness of Sins.*

II. The forgiveness of sins as the peculiar achievement of Christ.

Great and mighty were the difficulties in the way of forgiveness of guilty men. Merely to

ignore their sins, or arbitrarily to cease to know or regard men as sinners, was not enough. Sins are *facts*. They are immutable entities. They are positive realities, which can be dealt with only as realities. To refuse to know them, would not dispose of them. We may resolve not to know or notice the misdeeds of a criminal, but that does not alter his crimes, or do away with them. They still stand, as glaring, as guilty, and as ruinous as ever. And if Christ has no other power to forgive sins than simply to treat them as though they were not, his forgiveness cannot reach the case. He cannot unknow the reality and turpitude of sins, nor unmake them after they have passed into history. He must, therefore, know them; and any dealing with them looking to the sinner's deliverance must be in accordance with their real existence and evilness.

Neither would it answer to let down the Law's claims, or so to reduce its demands and exactions as to permit offenders to go free on such poor reparations and payments as they might be able to make. To relax the Law, would be to unGod the universe. Whatever else may occur, the sovereignty and justice of the Divine government, which is simply the embodiment of eternal right, must remain unimpeached and unimpeachable. And no one in heaven or earth can let down or modify the requirements of the Law, any more than abolish God, or the throne of God. Even Christ can no more ignore or refuse to know and maintain the Law in all its precepts and penalties,

than ignore the reality and evil of sin. And if ever that Law is to be disposed of so as not to work the eternal damnation of the wicked, it must be in a way which will neither compromise its majesty, nor interfere with its untarnished honor.

Neither would it answer to unmake the nature of man, or to sever the continuity of our being, so as to disconnect what is delivered and redeemed, from what was guilty and depraved. A man is a unit through all his existence; and if ever he is forgiven and saved, he must bear with him into heaven the same personal identity which was guilty and condemned. The forgiven man must be the same identical being that transgressed, and was under sentence of death. New springs of life and character may be opened up in his nature, but the same personal existence must remain in true historical continuity. Whatever newness of life is superinduced, it must be upon the same plant and stem of individual being which was under sin and condemnation.

All these are immovable landmarks in the case, which dared not to be transcended. If ever forgiveness was to come, it must come with these foundation-points clear and undisturbed. How, then, were these necessities met, so as to beget in the Son of man power on earth to forgive sins?

The answer to this question embraces the very heart and marrow of the Gospel. We find it summarily stated in such passages as the following: "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son

in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us." Rom. 8 : 3, 4. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his own Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4 : 4, 5. "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5 : 21.

Great and marvellous was the expedient, as sublime and astounding in the process as glorious and transcendent in the results! Put into other language, we may thus recount the history: The Son of God becomes also the Son of man. He conjoins himself with a literal, real, and perfect humanity. He lives himself into a pure, innocent, and holy human life, under the Law, and in the various stages of human condition. He fulfils the Law in humanity, lives its requirements, meets all its demands, and stands before it accepted and justified forever, as the only one of the race who had kept the Law, and fairly won its benediction on the basis of works. In that perfect, approved, and justified manhood, he then volunteered to answer in his own holy person for all the defects and sins of all humanity. Justified as to himself, he agreed to take the place of the condemned. By right exempt from any further suffering, he consented to suffer whatever suffering was due to sinful humanity. By his own merit forever free from each

and every penalty of the Law, he took upon him that penalty the same as if he had himself been the perpetrator of all the sins of all men. The Law said the sinner must die; and he agreed to lay down his life as the criminal. The Law excludes the sinner from the favor and blessing of God; and he consented to endure such exclusion, as we see in that awful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" And in every particular, of his own free accord, he took upon his innocent and holy self, to endure, feel, and bear in his own lone person, whatsoever was due in justice to all the defects and crimes of all sinful humanity. The Eternal Father approved and accepted of that pure, voluntary, and meritorious self-sacrifice, beheld in it a true and ample satisfaction for all that was against guilty man, and accordingly raised that Son from the dead, and exalted him "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," Acts 5 : 31; "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Luke 24 : 47.

All this was done in the counsel of God from all eternity; for Jesus is declared to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13 : 8. It was therefore for all the ages prior to its actual occurrence the same as if it had already occurred. In its virtue the ancient saints were forgiven and saved, and by that same virtue Christ also, even prior to his crucifixion, could say and demonstrate that he had "power on earth to forgive sins."

Thus, then, not by ignoring the sins of men, but by atoning for them; not by depriving the Law of its just honor and immutable claims, but by satisfying and exalting it; not by unmaking and recommencing the being of the sinner, but by coming between him and his deserved punishments; not by abolishing any facts or interests in the universe as constituted, but by a patient, laborious and glorious mastery of every point involved, Jesus has wrought out an achievement which stands alone and without a parallel in the universe, which no being but himself could ever have dared to attempt, and which will abide as an imperishable monument of the riches and knowledge of God, who through it can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Men in their stupidity and folly may regard it with indifference, or prefer earth's baubles to it; but in heaven everything thrills in the contemplation of it. The Living Ones and the gold-crowned Elders fall down before the Lamb and cry, "THOU ART WORTHY!" And around the throne, and afar into the depths of eternity, the myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands lift up their mighty voices and forever sing, "WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHICH HATH BEEN SLAIN, TO RECEIVE THE POWER, AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND MIGHT, AND HONOR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING!" while every holy creature bows down in deepest adoration and responds "AMEN!"

III. The forgiveness of sins as the primary offer of the Gospel.

I use the word "offer," because forgiveness of sins is not made of real effect except where there is openness to receive and entertain it. Where men reject the Gospel, refuse to credit its glad tidings, and set at nought its proclamations, though it be not emptied of that with which it is freighted, it still becomes of none effect and vain to them. Forgiveness is indeed there, and is "offered," the same as in every other case; only the unbeliever does not get it, for the reason that he puts it from him, and will not have it. It would be a very faulty doctrine indeed, to infer that all to whom the Gospel is preached are indiscriminately released and justified, whether they believe the Gospel or not. The Scriptures tell of people who shall have sorer punishment under the Gospel than was meted without mercy to the despisers of Moses' law. With all that Christ has done, and with all the preaching of the Gospel to them, there still are many upon whom the wrath of God abides, and who shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come. But it is no fault of the Gospel; for in it the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name is preached, and gratuitously offered to every one's reception.

What, indeed, is the Gospel, but the proclamation of God's mercy to sinners; the announcement of salvation to fallen man; the Divine publication of forgiveness and eternal life through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ? Such was distinctly its nature when yet confined to the first promise made in Paradise. Such was its nature

as shadowed forth in all the ceremonial appointments of God from Abel to Moses, and from Moses to the days of John the Baptizer. Even under the Law, it was the ever-outshining glory of the revelations and theophanies made to the ancient saints, that the Lord God, with all his terribleness and purity, is "merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Ex. 34 : 5–7. Isaiah was the great evangelical prophet; but the sum of his Evangely to Israel was: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Is. 1 : 18; 55 : 7. Before Christ was born, the angel gave command to "call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1 : 21. John pointed to him and said: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1 : 29. And he himself after his passion, explained to his disciples what was written of him "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms," as burdened with this great testimony, that, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name

among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24 : 44–47.

Such, accordingly, was the Gospel which the apostles proclaimed, and "with divers signs, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" attested. In the very first sermon, the word of Peter to the convicted thousands on the day of Pentecost was: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Acts 2 : 38. And Paul went forth through the cities of the Roman empire declaring to Jews and Gentiles that God hath concluded all under sin, but that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; and that "there is now therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8 : 1. And John sent out his greetings of love to all saints, saying, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," 1 John 2 : 12; and leads off in the lofty song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Rev. 1 : 5, 6.

Yes, there sounds a voice from heaven, and a merciful proclamation has come forth from the eternal Father. It speaks in the written word. It utters itself in the sacraments. It trembles on the tongues of all God's commissioned messengers to our world. It flashes up and down as the spirit and life of all the testimony of the Church. It comes to you again to-day in these sentences of

mine as they drop from my unworthy lips. And the great substance of it is, that Jesus Christ "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and so received upon himself the iniquity of us all, that the whole penalty of our sins is clean extinguished in his blood, and we are henceforth and forever free from their condemning power, if we only believe it.

It seems almost too good to be true. Our dull and doubting hearts are afraid to take it in. But this is the Gospel, and its peculiar and transcendent treasure, that it brings and offers to every one of us a free, full, and everlasting absolution and deliverance from all condemnation of the Law, just as we take and believe it. Being justified, it of course pertains to us to go on "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord;" but so far as that justification or forgiveness is concerned, *it is done*—it is complete—it cannot be made more perfect than it is already, provided only that we take and believe the announcement. It is not a thing of sense to be felt, as we would feel the shock of an electric current or a sudden bath; but a thing of simple faith, obtained and realized by mere confidence in the truth of the word that bears it. It is not a matter of merit, work, worthiness, or anything in us that goes before, accompanies with, or follows after, but it is given us absolutely for nothing, singly and alone in and through our acceptance of it. Such is the Gospel of God, and the preaching of it, that it carries and offers to every sin-burdened soul a present and perfected release from every jot

and tittle of any further answerableness for transgression, on the sole condition of believing and receiving it. Jesus says now, to every hearer of his Gospel, "*Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;*" and whosoever hath faith to take that word, is forgiven. And so true is this, that a believer lives beneath his privileges, and fails to make the required use of the great propitiation, and wants in homage to the completeness of our Saviour's work, if he does not at once cast from him forever the whole burden of the Law's condemnation; for it is gone, as the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh after the Red Sea closed upon them. Nay, we detract from the richness of heaven's free grace, and from the power of Almighty Goodness, and from all the terms and attributes of God's holy Evangely, so long as we allow the imagination of any remaining debt for past guilt that has not long since been cancelled and done away in Christ Jesus. Indeed, the great distinguishing characteristic and blessedness of our Christian Revelation is, that guilty, helpless, and undone sinners, as we are, need only to let go all else and confide in Jesus, and all our sins are covered, buried, and forever swallowed up in his atoning blood.

Such, then, is the glorious doctrine which is brought to us by this day's Gospel. Have you learned rightly to understand and use it? It is not meant to be to us a mere pleasing story, but a rock of strength and consolation to our souls, by which to assure ourselves forever against all the

terrors of conscience, all fear of death, and all dread of the day of judgment. And as God's minister, sent with his message to you for this occasion, I declare to you his forgiveness in Christ Jesus, and entreat of you to embrace and enjoy it. Ho, ye oft-sinning and oft-sorrowing children of men, receive and believe the word of your Saviour's absolution! You have been baptized; in that he has certified to you his forgiveness, just as you believe and take it. You are a member of his Church; in that a free and full remission reigns perpetually for all, and for you, just as you believe and take it. You have touched and tasted of the Holy Supper; in that a finished forgiveness was pledged and put into your hands and lips, just as you believe and take it. At any rate you have heard the preached Gospel, and in that preaching the word of forgiveness is ever sounding in your ears, and ever avails, just as you believe and take it. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth; that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10 : 8, 9.

There remaineth, then, but one question in order to determine any one's personal relation to this great forgiveness: the question, Dost thou *believe?* Dost thou *now* believe? It is not concerning the forgiveness that we need inquire; but only whether we believe; for the forgiveness is already perfect to every one that believeth. It needs no further

voice, either from within or from without, to make it sure; for it is already as sure as the word and resurrection of Jesus, and equally sure whether we know and feel it or not. There is no place for any flaw or mistake, but in the one sole point of our believing it. The paralytic simply believed Christ's absolving word, and he was absolved, and arose from his disability, and departed rejoicing to his house. According to his faith, so it was unto him. And as we believe Christ's like word to us, even so are we also forgiven.

Brother, does thy heart ache within thee when thou thinkest of thy sins and follies? I have a precious word for thee. It is the word of thy loving Lord and Saviour. It is a word which he has authorized me and all his ministers to speak in his name. And that word is, "*Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*" And just as thou believest that word, so is it unto thee. Oh, the preciousness of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God!

O Love, thou bottomless abyss!
My sins are swallowed up in Thee:
Covered is my unrighteousness,
No spot of guilt remains on me:
While Jesus' Blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries!

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATT. 22 : 1–14. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding : and they would not come.

Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner : my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready : come unto the marriage.

But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise : and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth : and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment : and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment ? And he was speechless.

Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

THIS is one of the last of the Saviour's parables. Like those of the Virgins and the Talents, it relates to the scenes of the second coming of the Lord, and the blessed things then to be dispensed. It is a pictorial illustration of the economy of grace in its

relations to the day of judgment. Let us, then, look at it with becoming seriousness, praying God to help us, that our meditations upon it may profit every one of us.

1. We are here told of *a great Father.* I need not say who that Father is. We are all his offspring; and he has ever been a true Father to us, and to all his creatures. He is the Source of all life—the Parent of the universe.

2. This Father is a sovereign—*a King.* He is not only the Parent of the universe, but he is its absolute Monarch. He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He not only made all things, but he likewise upholds and governs all things. His empire is unlimited; his dominion is supreme; his reign is forever. He is the royal Head of all that is, and the sovereign Disposer of all that transpires, on earth, in heaven, in all space, and in all time.

3. And this royal Father has *a Son;* not a creature, but begotten from his own Divine and eternal substance, very God of very God, made incarnate by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. About the form of his existence before his birth into our world, we need not now speak; nor do we know much, except that his goings forth have been ever of old, even from everlasting. His earthly history is more familiar, and more directly important to us. The Evangelists tell how he was born at Bethlehem, grew up at Nazareth, was baptized of John, anointed with the Holy Ghost, went about doing good, was crucified under Pontius

Pilate, died, was buried, rose again, ascended up from Mount Olivet, and is now at the right hand of the Father, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. The whole New Testament is nothing but the story of his life, deeds, teachings, institutes, and promises; and there is but one such a story, as God has but one such a Son.

4. For this Son, the royal Father has arranged *a marriage*. He was not to be alone. It was meant that he should have a Bride. As Eve was formed out of Adam, so out of Christ's wounded side was to be formed a mystic woman, to enjoy his princely love, and share his estate and glory. It was for this that he went into the deep sleep of death, and out of that sleep came a Bride for him. That Bride is his Church, created through faith in his blood, and betrothed to him in a holy covenant of love. All the subjects of grace are virgins, under promise and pledge to Christ, whom he has also engaged to take to himself in a blessed and eternal union. The Church is not yet the Bride of Christ, but only under engagements to become his Bride. The wedding is yet in the future. It is only a thing of promise and hope, to be fulfilled hereafter. But the marriage is in contemplation, and will come off at the time appointed.

The precise nature of that marriage, we do not yet know. The august ceremonials have been described to us in part; but only in part. We know that it is to be attended with great pomp and commotion in the heavens and in the earth.

We know that it is to be heralded with shouts and voices which will penetrate the graves, and awaken even the oldest sleepers there. We know that Christ is to leave the right hand of eternal Majesty, where he now sits; that he is to take his station again in those same clouds which received him up out of human sight; that there is to be a mounting up to him, by those who are his, to meet him there; that angels and principalities of heaven shall take part in the sublime arrangements; that the Eternal Father himself shall pronounce the consummation blessing; and that the Son of God shall then "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness," and be eternally happy in his people, as they are eternally happy in him.

5. In connection with this marriage there is to be *a great feast.* The King speaks of a "dinner" prepared; of oxen and fatlings slain; of things in readiness for a glorious entertainment. The ancients never celebrated marriages apart from banquetings and festivities, extending through not less than seven days. This was "a matter of indispensable obligation," according to the Rabbins. And these earthly "marriages" were the pictures of spiritual and eternal feasts. Even now a banquet of this sort is furnished us in the Gospel. In the Church God's royal board is spread, bearing plenty of "pleasant bread" to strengthen, milk to refresh, and wine to cheer. The great heart of the compassionate Father in heaven here offers the very "bread of heaven." And happy is that man who eateth of this bread.

But the "dinner" in this parable, is not so much the feast of Gospel grace on earth, as the feast of final blessedness in heaven—the joys of the kingdom in its full manifestation, when these shadows of time have given place to the realities of eternity. It is the banquet of which the Saviour spoke, when he said, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 8 : 11. And it is a peculiarly blessed feast. A great preacher has pictured it as "a feast of understanding, a feast of affection, a feast of memory, and a feast of anticipation." It is all this, but infinitely more. It is a feast of perfected redemption, of sublime coronation, of instatement into eternal regencies. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3 : 2. Prayers then change to praises, crosses to crowns, hope into fruition, feebleness into power, corruption into glory, mortality into eternal life; and all the toils, and aches, and disabilities of this world are swallowed up in the perfections and everlasting jubilee of heaven.

6. This feast was intended for *a particular people*, who failed to profit by their calling. The servants (δοῦλοι) were sent at first, not to call every one, but "them that were bidden;" and up to that time only the Jewish people had been bidden. Hence the first messengers of the Gospel, the twelve, and the seventy, were originally commanded not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any city of

the Samaritans, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matt. 10 : 5, 6. The original *bidding* to this feast we find in the Divine communications, covenants, and promises of the Old Testament, all of which had special and pre-eminent reference to the Jews. The subsequent calling of "them that were bidden," was after Christ appeared, and when that which had been promised was ready to be fulfilled. Had the Jews proved themselves worthy, and come, as they were called, the implication seems to be that the marriage would have been at once consummated. But "*they would not come.*" The Jews, as a people, rejected Christ, and crucified their own Messiah. They did not know the time of their visitation, and lost all the advantages of their election.

Still, they were not cut off at once. Though so disobedient to the first call, the King "sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." This was after the crucifixion, when the great sacrifice had already been offered. After his resurrection Christ gave a second commission to the apostles, which sent them into all the world, after that they had made a "beginning at Jerusalem." New facts had now occurred; new light had dawned; new evidences had been given; and perhaps the faithless ones would yet repent and come. The opportunity was therefore renewed, and the call pressed with all the sacred unction of apostolic zeal and

inspired eloquence. "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his servants, and slew them." Stephen was stoned to death; James the Just was slain with the sword; Paul they seized and sought to kill, and persecuted from court to court, till they secured his condemnation and execution at Rome. The nation already guilty of Messiah's blood, now filled up the measure of its wickedness by rejecting forgiveness, and murdering the men sent to offer it. No wonder that "the King was wroth, and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."

8. But the failure of the Jews, sent the call *to the Gentiles*. The wedding was ready, and they which were bidden were not worthy. Other guests had now to be sought, to fill the places which the chosen people refused. Henceforward the command was, "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." The children of the kingdom having been rejected because of their unbelief, the common thoroughfares of the world were now to be traversed for people to share the blessedness of the glorious marriage of the Lamb. From Jerusalem the call went down to Antioch, and Samaria, and Corinth, and Athens, and Rome, and through all the cities and nations, to this present hour. All God's ministers, in every age since Jerusalem fell, are these servants, ever busy to make disciples of all nations. Nor is the work done yet. Everywhere

the call is still sounding, in many tongues, and with varied tone, for men to come. The marriage has been long ready and waiting, and must delay till the requisite number shall have accepted the gracious invitation. How much longer it will be delayed, we cannot tell; but for the present God's commissioned servants are yet calling and bidding men to come to the wedding. I am here to-day for no other purpose than to bid you, in the name of the great King, to come and share the blessings of this glorious feast. Great is your privilege and mine. That farm, that merchandise, and those joys and pleasures which you so much value here on earth, are nothing—absolutely nothing—compared with the transcendent favors which I am commissioned to offer to you from the great Father in heaven. I thrill with admiration at the wonderful grace and goodness which has come to us in the Gospel. I wonder at the marvellous condescension of our God, that he should give to such sinful and unworthy hands a commission so sublime. I am amazed and confounded at the import of my own words, which it has been given me to speak to you from the Almighty King. But I am still more astounded that there should be so many people to whom all these unspeakable things are proposed, who never once seem to care whether they are accepted or not.

9. But of those who agree to come, not all are of the same class and character. The servants gather together "*both good and bad.*" The professed Church is a mixed assembly. Not every

one that takes the name and vows of a Christian is a Christian. There was a Judas even among the twelve apostles. We cannot know the heart; and if we could, it is not for us to clear out the tares, lest we pluck up also the wheat with them. If men come with a solemn profession of faith in Christ, it is our business to receive them. There is more chance of their getting right in the Church, than by staying out of it. At any rate we cannot admit people to the feast. The King himself reserves the doing of that. All we can do is to call them, and to gather them together as professed Christians and candidates for such admission. And in this gathering, there are some who are good, and some who are bad. We need never expect to have a perfect Church on earth. We must do all we can to have every one become an approved guest at the great banquet; but with all our endeavors, there will be some who are not what they ought to be. Nor are we without the consciousness all the while, that here one and there another is far from being a true and thorough Christian, even if they are baptized, confirmed, and fill their places at the Lord's table. Still, we dare not say them nay. Our business is to call them, teach them, and preach to them the truth, in hope that they may yet turn out what they ought to be. We may also be mistaken in our judgments. Some may be much truer Christians than we think they are, and some may be far from the mark who stand high in our estimation. We cannot tell with certainty. Therefore, we must keep on gathering

together as many as we can find, whether they prove to be saints or hypocrites.

10. *The King will presently come to inspect these guests.* It will be a most solemn time. There is nothing that so affects a man as to be put under rigid and searching examination; and when aware that the most momentous results are dependent upon it, the weight of the trial is sometimes almost unbearable. Stout and brave men have often broken down under such ordeals even here on earth. How, then, shall it be when the Omniscient Judge shall come forth to pronounce on our fitness to appear at the great marriage feast of heaven! From his glance, who can hide! From his knowledge, what can be concealed! To have every thought, every feeling, every secret thing of one's life looked into, and the whole character and situation laid open, knowing what solemn issues hang on the examination, who so gay and hardened as not to feel, or so brave as not to shrink? But, as surely as we live, and hope to be saved, that solemn review must be passed by every one of us. There is no escape from it. And just as we are, shall we then stand revealed to the eye of the King.

11. *A challenge* still more discomfiting will then also be addressed to the unprepared. If there be but one in all the great company who has not on the wedding garment, he will be noticed and singled out; and to him will the personal question come: "Friend (ἑταῖρε, rather *sir*), how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding gar-

ment?" It is the business of those who would go to great feasts, to see that they are becomingly arrayed. So Cicero thunders out against Vatinius: "Who ever appeared at a supper thus arrayed in black!" Just regard for the royal Maker of the feast, just regard for the comfort and pleasure of the guests, and just regard for one's self, peremptorily forbid appearance there except in the lawful attire for the occasion. And if Roman banquets, and oriental weddings, called for a special robe to render a guest's presence endurable, much rather is it required that we should have on us the particular garment prescribed, when we propose to take our place at the great and glorious marriage supper of the Lamb. That garment is especially, if not exclusively, the merit and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, put on by faith in his atoning blood, and without which no one can ever be admitted into the favor of God, or the glory of his kingdom. Hence Paul exerted himself so earnestly, that he might be found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith. Phil. 3: 7–14. This garment is furnished by the free gift of the King himself. It is presented to every called guest, that he may attire himself in it, and stand approved before God and all his holy ones. It is well fitted to each, and is easy to put on. It has cost amazingly, and cannot be despised or neglected without insult to the King. And for one to propose to appear at the great marriage supper without it, is utterly inexcusable. There-

fore, when the King "saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment," he demanded of him to answer for this deficiency. Men shall have to give account for their non-faith, as well as for their doings in this world. And when the question comes from the mouth of the King, "How camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" it will be a silencing, convicting, overwhelming inquiry. The man could not say a word—"*he was speechless.*" The case admitted of no apology. Guilty was he from every point of contemplation, and through every sense and fibre of his being flashed the dreadful conviction of it. What could he say? He may have had an excellent dress of his own; but it was not his business to parade that when the King had prescribed and provided a different garment. He might have thought to save the King that expense; but what right had he to dictate to his sovereign how to regulate his expenditures, or thus to reflect on other guests for being so dependent on their Host? He could not plead poverty, or want of time or opportunity; for there was the robe all ready for him, and there were the servants to direct and assist him. It was simply an insult to the King, and all his guests; a bald act of proclaimed rebellion against the authority, the majesty, and the goodness of his sovereign, for which there could be no excuse. And the man thus convicted before the whole company and in his own soul, sank in upon himself with awful consternation and dismay.

Ah, yes; there is a time coming, when those

who are so indifferent, gay, and light-hearted in their unbelief and neglect of God and his salvation, shall enter on a different experience. Many of them are fondly dreaming of getting to heaven, notwithstanding that they care nothing for Church, or Christ, or the means of putting on his righteousness; but their dreams shall go from them then, and in the place of them shall be the terrors of a self-crimination which is already the beginning of hell.

12. And upon such a conviction follows *a fearful expulsion.* The man who had no better appreciation of the feast, its Maker, and its rules, cannot possibly have place at it. He must be ejected. "Then said the King to the servants (not the δοῦλοι—the *ministers* who were sent to call men to the grand festival, but the διάκονοι—the *angels*, who are to take part in the administrations of these judgment scenes, according to Matt. 13 : 41, 42), Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here is sad exclusion—"*Take him away.*" The wheat and the tares remain together long; but the time for separation comes at last. We may not be able to tell one from the other; but God will soon distinguish between them, and gather every offender and false one from among his people. It matters not for their station, their wealth, their influence, their intelligence, their exemplary morality, or their useful activity; if they have not on them the true and only wedding garment, they

must go. Powerful as they may have been, they shall be powerless then. Much as they may have had to say about things, they shall be speechless then. The King's order is: "Take them away;" and there is no appeal from the sentence.

Here also is a chilling and repulsive realm assigned—"*Cast him into outer darkness.*" Aye, talk and quibble as men may, there is a darksome and terrible without. It is not for us to explore its territory, describe its climate, and map its conditions. As there is a glory too bright for human eye to gaze on, so there is an outside darkness too dense for human eye to penetrate. In that darkness be it veiled; but let us not cheat ourselves with the thought that there is no such outer and under world. It exists; and there is a hell as surely as there is á heaven.

And it is a place of untold misery—"*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" I have neither the heart nor the power to enter upon an inventory of an estate so deplorable. Those mournings unpitied, that future without hope, those tormenting memories and self-reproaches, and those interminable curses of God, and Christ, and self, and all things—may we never know them! But they must come, and settle forever into the being and experiences of the rejected and the lost.

Friends and brethren, what more needs to be said, or can be said? The whole matter is clear, outstanding, and unmistakable, in all its features, from beginning to end. The Saviour's Divine genius, intelligence, authority, and mastery of the entire case,

appears in every line of the presentation, without the possibility of mistaking the truth, or of escaping from it. And the only staggering thing relating to it is, that those who see and know all this as most certainly true, can yet be so infatuated, as to comfort themselves with hopes of heaven, while yet they sit in spiritual idleness and unconcern, content with the feeble shams of a little goodishness, which some think to pass for the religion of Christ, and a living, practical faith in him. Surely nothing of man can survive this world except that which is central, and inmost in his nature; and if his religion be not rooted there, and Christ be not taken on by the deepest interior grasp of faith, he goes to the judgment unrobed of everything which can then avail for him. And if ever we would have place at the glorious marriage of the Lamb, this is the qualification which we must, above all things, seek with undying earnestness. Nothing else will answer. And if any of you at this moment feel the slightest impulse to seek such a union with Jesus, cherish that impulse as his gift, and welcome it as his call. He would thus arouse and incite you to aspire after the glory that is within your reach. He would thus detach your heart from this world to fix it upon the blessed things to come. He knows how you thirst and yearn for happiness, and he would thus lead you to it. He would direct those desires, which now wander after the glittering phantoms of time, till they settle upon the mark of the prize of our high calling of God, in Christ Jesus, and rest in the blessed

realities of eternity. Therefore cherish those impulses, and follow and obey them. Suffer them not to be stifled by this world's cares, or the suggestions of your own treacherous heart; but honestly pursue them, till, in the grand supper hall of Heaven, you shall be forever satisfied.

The festal lamps are lighting now,
In the great marriage-hall;
By angel hands the board is spread,
By angel hands the sacred bread
Is on the golden table laid;
The King His own doth call.

The gems are gleaming from the roof,
Like stars in night's round dome;
The festal wreaths are hanging there,
The festal fragrance fills the air,
And flowers of heaven, divinely fair,
Unfold their happy bloom.

Come, then, beloved, to the feast;
Make haste, your day has come;
Thrice blest are they, the King doth call,
To share the heavenly festival,
In yon New Salem's palace-hall,
Our everlasting home!

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JOHN 4 : 46–54. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

THERE are several particulars, of some moment to all of us, brought to view in this piece of evangelic history, to which I propose to direct your attention this morning. They may be stated as follows:

I. *Even the noble have their trouble.*
II. *Even the believing need undeceiving.*
III. *When man despairs the Lord repairs.*
IV. *As we believe so we receive.*

And may God help us to take in and digest these truths to our edification and comfort!

I. EVEN THE NOBLE HAVE THEIR TROUBLE.

A kingly personage—a *βασιλικός*—one related to the royal court—here presents himself. Neither his name, nor his precise rank is given. He may have been a civil or a military officer; but he was a man connected with the government—a person high in place—and perhaps a relative of King Herod. It was not the centurion spoken of by Matthew and Luke, who had soldiers under him, and who, from his command of them, argued the Saviour's authority among spiritual potencies. The statements here differ materially from the statements in that case. This man was rather a civilian and courtier than a soldier, and hence one much higher, and much nearer to the king in rank than a mere centurion, or the commander of a hundred men, would be. Nor do we mistake in taking him for one of the official nobility, closely allied to royalty, in place, if not in blood.

His distinction, however, was no protection against the inroads of adversity. Trouble was in his house. Grievous sickness and threatening death had invaded his home. His son, perhaps his only son, perhaps his only child, lay at the point of death. With all his exalted rank and authority, he was subject to the same trials suffered by other men. No earthly dignity, no favors of earthly kings, no royal blood or relations, can lift above the reach of sorrow, or purchase exemption from distress. Sickness and death enter the houses of the great, and the families of the noble,

just as freely as the homes of the lowly. These adventitious distinctions do not at all affect the common ills of humanity. Wherever there is a man, be he king or subject, be he master or servant, be he high or low, he cannot escape the lot to which all mortals are born. In the eye of God, and in the operations of his laws, the rich and the poor, the noble and the humble, are all on one and the same plane. They possess alike the same diseased human nature—the same tainted blood—and are subject alike to the same vicissitudes, infirmities, and dangers. The splendors of a court life, and the trappings of rank and office, can no more ward off the inroads of disease or the bitterness of domestic affliction, than the humblest station or the lowliest forms of life. "Man, that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of trouble."

We need never, therefore, expect, in this world, to reach an estate in which to be free from trials and afflictions. Wherever we are, and in whatever we undertake, we do only deceive ourselves, and look for peace where no peace is, if we presume to think that now we have gotten beyond the reach of storms, and that the rest of our course shall be in quietness and sunshine. Our lives may be noble; our undertakings may be noble; all our purposes may be noble; even our achievements may be noble; but our house will still have in it the sick son, the pangs of sorrowing affection, the weariness of anxious watchings, the suspense of wavering hopes, the fear of disastrous calamity.

We may doctor at the ailments, but that will not cure them. We may clear about as with all possible care, and even with royal expenditure, but ill seeds still lie hidden in the soil, and ill growths appear with every springing harvest.

Troubles, however, are not always calamities. To the true-hearted and the rightminded they are the instruments of augmented good. These sorrows in the nobleman's house were the preludes and preparation for the incoming of a sublimer joy. There are possessions among the most precious in the universe, which can never be reached but through much tribulation. Nobility must suffer, that it may become more noble. The fruitful branch must be purged, that it may become more fruitful. God often leads his Israel through base servitude, through threatening seas, through howling wildernesses, through plague, and battle, and flood, that they may know him the better, and rejoice in him the more, when once the promised land is fairly portioned to them. He sends grief and trouble upon Abraham, and Moses, and Joshua, to call out virtues, decisions and deeds of grandeur, which otherwise would never have given forth their light and glory. He sends disturbances through the empire, and calls the august Diet for their settlement, that emperor and kings may hear the true Gospel from his accused servants, and the confession of his revived Church go out from the sublimest mount of this world's greatness. Wherefore, "beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try

you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." *Even the noble have their trouble.*

In like manner,

II. EVEN THE BELIEVING NEED UNDECEIVING.

This nobleman was a believer. He had heard of Jesus and his marvellous healing power. He had heard of his presence in Galilee and of the cures he there wrought. And he believed what he had heard. As Luther expresses it: "He counteth Christ for such a man as is able to help men, and hopeth and promises to himself all goodness from him. He does not stand in a road with two branches, doubting which to take. If he had done this, he never would have come to Christ. But he doth not doubt, and doth not hesitate to make haste unto him." *He believed.*

And there was also strength and substance in his faith. It was not mere sentiment—not a mere dead persuasion—not an empty and unmoving assent. There is a sort of faith which is dead. It may even be more intelligent than that of this nobleman, and still not serve as a principle of action, or set in motion with reference to what is believed. Mere knowledge, however accurate, and mere opinion however orthodox, is not faith.

The intellect may be informed and persuaded, but, if the conduct be unaffected, and the life be not conformed to that persuasion, there is no availing faith. Whilst it is very important to have right information, it is still more indispensable that there be a living and active *doing* according to what we know. This man's faith had this active quality. It moved him to go to the Saviour, and to make every effort to obtain his help. He was not only persuaded that Jesus was able to heal his child, but he was so persuaded of it that he went to Christ, laid the case before him in person, and earnestly implored his help.

True faith cannot be idle. It will have works to evidence it. As a living spring cannot exist without flowing, so faith cannot exist without activity. And as long as the nature of things continues what it now is, the pointed words of the Apostle James must remain true: "Know, O man, that faith without works is dead." James 2 : 20.

But even with this living faith influencing and controlling him, this nobleman was laboring under misconceptions and infirmities. He located the Saviour's power and office too much in the outward and visible, and too little in the inward and spiritual. He was too much bent on seeing "signs and wonders," and too little disposed to rest in Christ as a spiritual Saviour.

And just here it is that believers have their greatest troubles, and are often unnecessarily disturbed. They go honestly and humbly to Christ

as the great wonder-worker, and have unbounded confidence in his grace and power; but unless they "see signs," and have some sensible demonstrations of his saving almightiness, they hesitate, and doubt whether all is right. That sick child must be healed; that thorn in the flesh must be taken away; those turbid waters of Jordan must part before setting foot in them; some change must be felt, ere they can fully rest in the blessed Christ. And because they cannot see redemption enacted at once, and do not mount to heaven at one bound, they doubt, and cannot confide in the Saviour. Except they "see signs and wonders," they will not believe. They want the outward demonstration first, before they can inwardly believe, or trust. But the requirement is, simply and undoubtingly embrace Christ and confidingly leave to him to make all other things right in his own time and way. "We are saved *by hope;*" *i. e.*, the practical carrying of our redemption into effect on the theatre of our bodily and outward being and condition, is a thing of the future. We cannot have it yet, except by anticipation. "Hope that *is seen* is not hope," but fruition; "for what a man *seeth*, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope *for that we see not*, then do we with patience wait for it." Rom. 8 : 24, 25.

Here is the true consolation of faith; not that the sick child is already healed; not that the buffeting messenger of Satan is already taken away; not that heaven has already settled down upon this world, turning all its ills to joys, its disabilities

into perfections, its *misereries* to halleluias, and its conflicts into triumphs; but that we have a Saviour, competent for all these things. Jesus *is* the wonder-worker. Our faith fails us, if it does not behold and embrace him as wielding all power in heaven and earth for our entire salvation. We must believe this, and go to, and confide in him accordingly. But for the time being, *patience—patience*—calm waiting in hopeful expectation,—is the attitude for faith to assume, not in the least disturbing itself because the facts are not all wrought out at once, or because our eyes do not yet behold all the "signs and wonders" already accomplished. Even faith is prone to be too exacting in its demands; too impatient in its requirements; too restless for the possession of its goal. *Even the believing need undeceiving.* But,

III. When man despairs the Lord repairs.

The manner in which this nobleman's application was received, greatly disheartened and distressed him. There was to him a degree of rebuke and repulse in what the Saviour said. He did not refuse the man's prayer; but he complained that people were so impatient to have him work wonders, and yet so slow to receive and confide in him as their Lord and Saviour. There was a manifest hesitation to fill up at once this nobleman's calculations. He looked for the Saviour to accompany him to his house. He counted it necessary that the Master should see the child, and touch him,

and speak into his ears. And when no signs of such compliance appeared, his heart sunk within him. What should he do? He had come hither as his last hope. He felt sure that Jesus alone could help him. And yet Jesus gave no visible indications of readiness to fulfil his desires. Oh, the despairing anguish, the agonized earnestness, gathered into that father's final appeal: "*Sir, come down, ere my child die!*" Here was broken and dissolving hope; here was disappointed grief; here was inrushing despair; here was the oncoming of the blackness of darkness—in the very presence of gracious almightiness.

And yet, this last flicker of perishing expectation was the signal of greatest triumph. While he was at the point of despair, his child was at the point of being healed. The outward repulse was an inward drawing near. The apparent refusal was the veil of a mightier and freer compliance. It was not according to Christ's method, that his healing should come "with observation," escorted with the pomp and pageantry of worldly triumph and nobility. Not in bodily presence and outward contact does his saving power reside. His restorative energy is in his Word, which neither time nor distance can enfeeble, and the might of which is not dependent on visible promises or signs. As man views things, he may dismiss us, and seem not to entertain our cause, and yet favors and blessings greater than we ever dreamed of accompany that dismissal. Even his chidings are mercies, and his "*Go thy way*," has more of the

power of benediction in it than nobility can imagine. The good Physician increases the wound, and the more sickens the system, that he may make an effectual cure. Outward adversity and the obscuration of our earthly hopes, are Christ's methods of opening to us the richest treasures of his grace. It is when we cast ourselves at his feet, despairing of help, that we are nearest his saving mercies. When all trust in our own strength, and all dependence upon means and methods of our proposing, are brought low, then the potency of God invisibly goes forth for our deliverance. And whilst we are being wrung with the anguish of disappointment and despair, grace is invisibly entering our house, and the festival of joy is making ready. Esther, with the death-plot signed against her and her people, with no way of escape but by the grace of the golden sceptre, to obtain which imperilled life, and crushed down into the last extremity of desperation, was already on the highway to her grandest victory. Peter, struggling with the waves, sinking in the angry sea, and giving out his last despairing cry ere death should overwhelm him, feels the grasp of the helping hand at the very instant he counted his case most hopeless. When Paul found himself the weakest, and his infirmities most overwhelming, he discovered the power of God mightiest, and the cause for which he trembled making its greatest advances. It was when Luther went into Worms despairing of ever leaving it alive, and in those memorable words gave up to burn and

die, that the dawn of a new era cast its first beams on Christendom, and the pulse of a new birth for the nations began to beat.

As long as Christ's servants say to themselves: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" they are only "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,"—offensive to God, and in danger of utter rejection. When people begin to take up into their prayers: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men," and pride themselves in what pious things they do, their abasement is at hand. It is when we feel our poverty and wretchedness that our case is most hopeful. It is when we are weak that we are strong. It is when things go ill to sense and earthly calculation, that they go best for ultimate and spiritual triumph. Israel, hemmed in, pursued, and despairing on the margin of the roaring sea, is close upon the jubilee to be sung on the further shore, while Egypt's hosts, in their proud confidence, find it the mouth of hell. *When man despairs, the Lord repairs.*

And yet, the story is not all told. There is here still another blessed and comforting truth for our acceptation and digestion.

IV. As we believe, so we receive.

This nobleman was greatly disappointed as to what he had so confidently expected. But in the moment of his deepest grief, "Jesus saith unto him, *Go thy way, thy son liveth.* And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken;" and

presently the tidings came that his dying child was well. With all his seeming repulse, he got more than he had counted on. The deliverance was quicker, and more complete, and wrought with greater ease, than he had dreamed of. A mere word had gone out. He went his way, as he was commanded, clinging to that word. And as he believed, so it was unto him. He came to Christ believing him to be a wonder-worker, and he found him a wonder-worker. He trusted in what the Saviour said, even when his mission seemed to be on the point of failure; and he came back to find the Saviour's word potent and true where he had imagined other necessities, and greater things wrought than he had sought. Sickness and death had fled; the glory and power of Christ were revealed in his house; and the songs of salvation took the place of sighs and sad anxieties.

What, then, if society is sick, and the Church is sick, and we are sick, and our whole house is sick? What if our prayers, and tears, and efforts, and expectations have not brought us the coveted deliverance? What if our troubles have only multiplied and deepened by what we honestly undertook for the better? If our movements have been Christward—towards the true and only centre of saving power, his seeming repulse and chidings are not discomfiture, but preparations for sublimer triumph. His word is, "*Go thy way.*" No honest attempt of faith is ever a mistake. Jesus is the true Healer; and his good will, and readiness to

help, are with them who sincerely seek him. Only we should have come earlier; come with larger trust in him; come with greater and more spiritual confidence in his grace and power. But now that we have come, his command is, "*Onward;*" with promise that life, and healing, and joyous salvation await us at home! We may sometimes feel disheartened; but there is no real cause for it. The difficulties may seem greater than would admit of what we desire; but they are all nothing to the power of Jesus. His word is out. That word speaketh life, and victory over all disease and disability—a blessed healing in this world, and everlasting peace in the world to come. And our business is to take up that word with confidence, to cherish it in our deepest soul, to comfort and strengthen ourselves in it, and to go our way over hills and plains, through light and darkness, sure that we will find all as our Lord hath said.

Jesus is more gracious and loving than we think; and, through his potent mercy, things are already better than we know. As we believe, our faith is telling where we see not, and the watching servants have noticed the symptoms of improvement of which we have not yet learned. Only let us *on*, in steady faith in what our Lord has spoken, feeding on his word, turning aside neither to this by-path nor to that, giving heed to no other counsels, accepting no other physicians; and voices will presently meet us with tidings of good, gladdening all our after march with assurances of happiness at home.

This nobleman believed the word which the Saviour had spoken, and went his way homeward with glad confidence. Night came with its chilly darkness, but it did not obscure the light which the word of Jesus had kindled in his heart. Hills, and streams, and dangerous places had to be passed; but they never once disturbed his inward peace. *On*, *on*, he went, trusting and hoping in the Saviour's word, till assured by voices from home; and then still more gladly *on*, till he *saw* the sickness gone, the dying restored, the grief removed, and all sorrow swallowed up in salvation's joys!

Nor will it be different with us. Often the way may be rough, and dark, and threatening, and difficult; but so long as we have the plain word of Jesus, let us cling to that, hope through it, strengthen ourselves by it, confide in it, obey it, trusting that what our Lord hath spoken is true. Hearts are throbbing, feet are moving, tongues are speaking, already, under the inspiration of the good things wrought, which we see not yet. Presently the veil will be lifted; messengers will come to assure us of the result; companions in our joy shall accompany us with blessed revelations; and the doors of home shall open to welcome into the fruition of all that the Lord hath spoken, and to a thousandfold more than we at first supposed, or set out to obtain.

Ah yes; faith is a blessed principle. It brought this man to Jesus; it brought recovery to his dying child; and it gave salvation to him and his

house. It reaches out to things not seen as yet, into the future, and even into worlds to come, and brings to hand for present realization what is still far away, so enriching the present hour as to make its trials light, its duties easy, and its triumphs sure.

"Fear not, then, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Only believe. Sore trials may be upon you now, and still severer ones may await you. Dark night and a toilsome way may yet be between you and home. The gibes of the scornful, the laughs of those who hate and fear you, the ill prognostications of those who wish you harm, and the opposition of those who should be with you in your struggles, may all come upon you. Let them come! Having the Master's word, you have enough. Receive it; believe it; remember who it is that hath said it; and trust to it in all your homeward journey. And that happy nobleman, comforted and glad in what he found at his journey's end, shall yet turn out to be yourself. For *as we believe, so we receive.*

There, like streams that feed the garden,
Pleasures without end shall flow;
For the Lord your faith rewarding,
All his bounty shall bestow.
God shall rise, and shining o'er you,
Change to day the gloom of night:
He, the Lord, shall be your Glory,
God your everlasting Light.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 18 : 23–35. **Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.**

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence : and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not : but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me : Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

THIS parable is meant to illustrate and enforce the law of forgiveness. Luther calls it "a very comfortable text, and sweet to troubled consciences, inasmuch as it containeth nothing but forgiveness of sins;" although he does not fail to find in it also terrible judgment for the unmerciful and hard-hearted.

The Saviour had just been giving some important directions with reference to the treatment of offenders. Upon this subject the Jews taught, as in their Talmud, that, "If a man commits an offence, he is to be forgiven the first time, and also the second and third time; but that if he sins a fourth time, he is not to be forgiven." Peter, in listening to the Saviour, began to be impressed with the necessity of a larger and more liberal graciousness. Doubting, however, how far Christ's inculcations of forgiveness were to be carried, and yet feeling that some limit ought to be set to them, he went to the Master for more definite instructions, and asked him, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" No doubt he thought he was stretching the thing very far, and that it was a very extraordinary graciousness that should serve to forgive seven successive offences. But, instead of stopping where Peter thought the stop, in largest charity, should come, the Saviour declared the rule applicable to an indefinite number of offences, even to as many as "seventy times seven." The question of Peter showed that he did not yet comprehend the true nature and foundation of forgiveness, and that the whole subject needed illumination to his mind. The Saviour, therefore, proceeded to give the necessary elucidation by means of the parable now before us—the parable of the unmerciful servant—in which the spring and motive of mutual forgiveness of injuries are traced up to God's gracious forgiveness of us, and the

interdependence of the one on the other brought out to view.

But before we enter upon the direct exposition, it may be well, first of all, to be put on our guard against misapplications which unskilful hands might be betrayed to make of this parable.

1. It would be an error, and quite aside from the intention of the Saviour, to apply it to the subject of property obligations and money-debt. This is not the kind of debt in which we are so greatly obligated to God; nor does he ever remit debts of such sort. The subject of money obligations is not touched at all, except in the mere incidental way of mercifulness in the exaction of our claims. *Moral debts*, injuries, offences, wrongs, trespasses, *sins*—and the inward remission and heart-forgiveness of these, constitute the subject of which the parable treats. Jesus never taught community of goods, or laxness in business, or indifference to the debts we contract with each other in the secular affairs of life. "Pay what thou owest;" "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" "be faithful in business;" "defraud no man;" these are all precepts of correct morals, as necessary to the good order of society, as they are plainly inculcated in the ethics of the sacred Scriptures. And when the Saviour requires of us to forgive our debtors, in order to have our debts forgiven, he does not mean that we cannot have God's forgiveness of our sins if we ask people to pay us what they owe us. *Moral* debts, not *money*-debts; injuries and wrongs, not dues in the way

of contract and promise, are here the theme. And we must not confound the outward form of the parable with its inward substance.

2. Neither does it relate to civil punishments. As Luther says, "this parable speaketh not anything of worldly government, but of the kingdom of God only." Society demands law and government. It cannot exist without it. And government implies the power to smite offenders, and to inflict penalties on the unruly and disobedient. Magistracy is as much recognized in the Scriptures as mercy. There must be civil rulers; and the administrator of earthly law "is the minister of God to thee for good. . . . . He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom. 13: 1–5. And he is no more at liberty to connive at offences against the good order of society, than he is to commit them. "The God of Israel said, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." 2 Sam. 23: 3. Mercifulness well becomes him; but mercy at the expense of law and order, would be iniquity, and transgression against both God and man. But no administration of civil government, and no obedience thereto, can give remission of sins, or absolve men before God, or each other. These do not therefore come within the purview of this parable, which is specifically given as an illustration of the higher and spiritual "kingdom of heaven."

3. Neither are we to see in this parable the history of any particular person or persons, but sim-

ply the exhibition of the nature and working of the Divine principle of grace, first in absolving us, and then in the temper which it necessarily begets in the hearts of those who are the subjects of it. We are not to take what is said of this king as in all respects a picture of God, nor what is said of either of the servants, as in all respects a picture of a Christian. God never proposes to sell a man's wife and children to get satisfaction for his debts; nor does he impart forgiveness to a man who still carries in him such an unforgiving temper; nor does he ever angrily deliver over a forgiven man into immediate and irremediable perdition. These are only outside things, which help to bring to view certain spiritual truths, but are not the inner substance on which alone our attention is to fasten.

4. Neither is it intended to teach us by this parable, that our exercise of forgiveness is in any way the procuring *cause* of God's forgiveness. It is indeed taught here, that God's forgiveness never accompanies a resentful and unforgiving spirit; but there is a very wide distinction between the procuring cause of a thing, and the condition on which it is made available. Out of pure affection I may offer to give some precious thing in my possession, on condition that you call at my house for it at a particular time. But your calling for it could never secure it without the foregoing affection and willingness on my part at that time and in that way to make it yours. Your calling at the appointed time, which is the condition, is one thing; but, the causes which induced me to

put it within your reach on compliance with that condition, is quite another thing. And so the procuring cause of God's forgiveness to men is something wholly distinct from that mutually forgiving temper on which its impartation is suspended. We may forgive, and still not be forgiven; but we cannot be forgiven, and yet be unforgiving. The ground of God's forgiveness of us, is his own merciful goodness, in giving his only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and our forgiving of men their trespasses, has no more to do with it than the sacrifices of idolatry. It is only in the letting forth of that forgiveness, and in connection with the right apprehension, fruit and evidence of it, that the matter of our own forgiving disposition comes in at all. It is the working of God's forgiveness upon our temper, that we are here to see, and not some supposed working of our acts of remission upon the mind and feelings of God.

With the way thus cleared and guarded, let us now consider some of the elements of the parable itself.

1. Man is an immense debtor. There is a vast, undischarged, outstanding obligation from every one of us to God. We are all born servants of the Eternal King, and have been living on his royal bounties all our days. Our account with him has been increasing against us every hour since our lives began, and is augmenting still with every breath, and every pulsation of our hearts. For twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, he has in-

dulgently permitted that account to run on, until now we owe him "ten thousand talents." Debts for mercies received; debts for mercies abused; debts for time and talents wasted; debts for offences committed; debts for duties neglected; debts for daily bread, for friends, for homes, for social peace, and for Gospel privileges—and debts almost infinite in number and variety—have we all, standing against us in the book of God's remembrance.

2. Very sad also is man's estate in view of this enormous indebtedness. How is it to be met, or settled off? We have nothing to pay. Nothing that we possess is our own, and nothing that we can do can reach one single entry so as to counterbalance it. Yet God has a right to demand settlement and satisfaction, and does demand it. We cannot escape from the justice and force of the vast obligation. We are liable to be put in prison for it, to have friends, wife, and children taken for it, and to be stripped of all we have to satisfy it. Sin, and obligations undischarged, levy on every possession and comfort of man, and denude him of everything worth living for, and even then, still hold him with an angry and unrelenting grasp. The language of justice toward every such insolvent debtor is: Sell him; sell his wife; sell his children; sell all he has. And if that will not do, deliver him to the tormentors, and let him never rest till the uttermost farthing is paid. To all this are we exposed.

3. There is, however, a way for these terrible consequences to be averted. This indebted ser-

vant appealed to the clemency of his lord, and vowed unto him. It was a successful appeal. "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." God is merciful. He proclaimed himself to Moses, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Ex. 34 : 6, 7. And he may be successfully entreated by poor distressed souls oppressed with their indebtedness and misery.

There are but three reasons on which a human sovereign can be supposed to withhold pardon from a criminal. He may be revengeful, exacting, and unpitying in his own heart; or the stability of his government and the order of his kingdom may forbid it; or the temper of the guilty one may not be such as to render it suitable. But God is not unmerciful or revengeful. The very essence of his nature is love. He is called *God*, because he is Good, the centre and embodiment of all goodness. As to the demands of the law, and the requirements of just government, they also have been provided for. It was a great, mysterious, and costly proceeding; but it has been done. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ has satisfied and vindicated forever the honor of the Divine government, and made it possible for God to be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. There is, therefore, no impediment on that score to the granting of pardon and forgiveness to man.

There remains, then, but one other question, and that is, whether the debtor is in a fit condition to receive it. If there lives an unpardoned sinner on the face of the earth, it is not because God is indisposed to be merciful to him, nor because it would be a compromise of the honor of the Divine government to forgive him, but simply and only because that man is not sufficiently humbled to come to terms on the subject. He is impenitent; he is not willing to acknowledge his indebtedness and misery; he is too proud, too stout-hearted, too perverse in his temper, to take the forgiveness which is otherwise ready for him. Let him only fall down before his almighty Creditor; let him ask devoutly for patience, indulgence, and leniency; let him only show that he is a fit subject of Divine clemency; and the absolving word will at once be spoken: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

4. But there are many great debtors to whom the Lord's word of entire forgiveness has been spoken, who yet in the end fail of the advantages of it. This released servant was, after all, condemned as a "wicked servant," and finally went down under his lord's wrath to prison and to torment.

The question mooted by the schoolmen, whether sins once forgiven ever come back to be answered for again, need not here be discussed. Luther says, "I let it pass, as a question that has its seat in ignorance of what remission of sins is; which is not a thing that cleaveth to the heart and

lieth quietly, but plainly is that kingdom of Christ which endureth without ceasing forever. For as the sun shineth even though I close my eyes, so this mercy-seat and forgiveness of sins standeth always, though I fall. And as, when I open my eyes, I see the sun again, so I have forgiveness of sins again, if I arise from my fall, and return to Christ. Hence, let no man bring forgiveness into such a strait as that of which these madmen dream." The forgiveness of one debt does not preclude the making of another. If the absolved debtor goes away and plunges himself into the same embarrassments again, whether his old debts be revived or not, his case is the same as from the first; nay, worse, because he offends against greater mercies. If he does not value his pardon so as to direct his subsequent life in the light and spirit of it, he only involves himself in fresh guilt and deeper condemnation. And though there be no revocation of his former absolution, still, his last estate is just the same as if all mercy had been revoked, and worse. So it was with the superior servant in this parable. He is forgiven, but he does not live in the light of that forgiveness. He does not copy after it. He does not so feel the loveliness of it as to be induced to imitate it in his own behavior. He even condemns it by the principles on which he acts; and so contracts a new account, which makes him appear and fare the worse for the great mercies of which he had been the recipient. He was forgiven a debt of "ten thousand talents;" yet refused the least for-

bearance when only a "hundred pence" were owing to him. He was himself dependent for the good fortune of being a creditor to the graciousness of the sovereign of all; yet he proceeded to deal with his debtor with a more tyrannizing severity than would have been defensible had he himself never been in need of clemency. He had been freely and fully forgiven, when he had not the smallest right to expect it; yet he goes off, and for a debt of a few dollars, displays the most heartless and unappeasable violence; refuses to pity the distress, or to regard the entreaties of his fellow-servant; and thrusts him into "durance vile" until every penny shall be paid!

A sad commentary this upon the ingratitude, inconsistency, and baseness of man. He who at one moment crouches in servility and supplication at the feet of his lord, turns aside the next, and takes his fellow-servant by the throat, upon an account not to be mentioned by the side of that which had been graciously remitted unto himself! He who begs off from an indebtedness of "ten thousand talents," lords it most despotically over his brother servant for "a hundred pence!"

5. But God's forgiveness is not bestowed that we may indulge our selfishness and greed. His eye is on those to whom his absolution has been spoken, and their uncharities and severities have a voice which comes up into his ears. He is very jealous of his honor in the pardoning mercy which he shows. And all who forget it, and by their conduct contradict and belie it, must expect to

encounter his anger, and to be dealt with according to the harshness they show. The lord of this servant was wroth at his uncharitable behavior, rebuked him for his inconsiderateness and unfeeling inconsistency, "and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." Though forgiven, all his gracious forgiveness was vitiated, and made of none effect, by the wickedness which followed.

The temper required in a forgiven man is, that he should illustrate in his own conduct what he has experienced from his Lord. The king says: "I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" It was the man's business and bounden obligation to deal toward his fellow-servants with the same spirit that his lord had dealt with him. So the Saviour himself interprets and points the lesson. "So likewise," says he, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." As we ask God to do for us, so are we to deal toward those with whom we have to do. If we are not forgiving, we are not in a state of forgiveness. If we are not in charity with our fellows, we are not in favor with God. "If we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses." We may have received upon us the sacred waters of baptism, offering, signifying, and pledging to us, direct from the hand and mouth of Jesus, a full

and true spiritual washing from all sin. We may have had the word of pardon spoken into our ears, the same as if it had come direct from the very throne of God. We may have taken into our hands and into our lips the holy elements by means of which the very salvation of God was conveyed to us. We may even have been made to taste of the sweet freedom of release from the bonds of our just condemnation. But, if no corresponding mercifulness and tenderness has been made to flow therefrom into the temper of our dealing toward those who are dependent upon our will, it must all pass for nothing, and we still are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." Though we should be able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, we are become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though we have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though we have all faith so as to be able to remove mountains, and have not charity, we are nothing. And though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and though we give our bodies to be burned, and have not charity, we shall be nothing profited. Such is the nature of grace and of the kingdom of God, that it necessarily conforms to itself the hearts for whom it avails, and reflects and reproduces *from* man what it conveys *to* man. It makes the mind and temper of God manifest in our mind and temper. It images what Jesus is to us by what we are to one another. And the absence of what is Christlike in our behavior,

is the absence of availing mercy for us. The test may be severe, but it is unavoidable.

Let us, then, not deceive ourselves. Faith is a great and important thing. Hope is a great and important thing. Charity is a great and important thing. "But, the greatest of these is charity;"—*the greatest*, because it is the fruit, perfection, and ultimate test of all the rest. If we do not forgive, we are not forgiven.

6. There is yet a side-stroke in this parable which helps still further to illustrate the great practical teaching which the whole was meant to illuminate and enforce. There are other servants spoken of besides the two debtors. They were the spectators of the unmerciful behavior of the one to whom the king had been so gracious. And "when they saw what was done, they were very sorry." There had been a glaring piece of ingratitude and inconsistency enacted—an impiety toward the gracious sovereign, and a despotic outrage upon a fellow man. They beheld it, and they felt it. But how did they deal with it? Did they flash with anger and resentment? Did they set to and abuse, smite, and traduce the unmerciful servant? No; it was for the king to be angry, and to adjudge what was to be awarded to the wretched man. They were but servants, and they could only be "*sorry*"—only grieve over their fellow-servant's misbehavior.

And this is the form which true charity takes when called to witness sinfulness which it cannot remedy. It "rejoiceth not in iniquity;" neither

doth it set itself to resent it; but is sorry over it, and is grieved on account of it. There is no sadder thing to a right-minded man, than to behold another giving himself to sin and wrongdoing. It is a sadder thing than to see a fellow-man die; for a man had better die any time than sin. And when we see evil doing, it ought to affect us deeply. God's mark of protection and favor is "on them that sigh and that cry for the abominations that are done." If we do not mind the wickednesses of men, we are already consenters to those wickednesses, and accessories to the guilt. It is a deplorable state of things when "the wicked sin, and no man layeth it to heart." And especially are we to feel and lament it, when those to whom God has pronounced his forgiveness behave themselves in a manner so inconsistent and so unbecoming. To hear words of cursing and blasphemy from the lips of a child upon whom the great name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has been called; to behold the lambs of Christ's flock running with the goats of this world; to find people who sit under the preaching of the Gospel conducting themselves in the world as if they were heathen; to see people who have been upon their knees before God's altar, and there avowed their misery and their gladness to take the salvation of Jesus Christ, go away and take their fellow-servants by the throat, and give themselves to all manner of bad passions and misdoing; if such things do not grieve, afflict, and distress us, it is because the

spirit of faith and charity is yet wanting or very feeble in ourselves.

And yet the wrongdoings of a brother are not to provoke us to assume the office of his judge and resentful avenger. There is a strong predisposition to mount the throne of judgment, when we should be kneeling at the throne of grace. These servants were grieved at their fellow-servant's misdeeds, and were so grieved that they went, not to the housetop to publish them to the world, but to the king himself to tell him of their pain. Not resentment, but *prayer*, is the resort of charity bleeding in heart over the wrongs and sins which it cannot remedy.

Look thou with pity on a brother's fall,
  But dwell not with stern anger on his fault;
The grace of God alone holds thee, holds all;
  Were that withdrawn, thou too wouldst swerve and halt.

Rebuke the sin, but yet in love rebuke,
  Feel as one member in another's pain;
Wean back the soul that His fair path forsook,
  And mighty and eternal is the gain.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATT. 22 : 15–22. Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man : for thou regardest not the person of men.

Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's.

When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

THIS passage brings before us the singular picture of Christ among the politicians. Directly, and of his own choice, he had very little to do with political matters. Though a King, and come for the purpose of instituting a kingdom, his whole bearing with regard to the temporal authorities was, what he afterwards put into words, to wit, that his kingdom is not of this world. The vices of those in high places he rebuked with unsparing severity, as his forerunner had done before him, and for the hirelings of party he unhesitatingly applied some of the se-

verest epithets contained in the Scriptures; but with reference to political questions and quarrels he was always most singularly silent. The reason may have been, that then, as now, most political questions were among the most dishonest in vogue, and the least worthy of a true man's attention. He came to call the minds of men to more important matters, to direct their aspirations toward a sublimer and more enduring citizenship, and to set them to work for riches and honors which shall never fail their possessors.

But the contempt which he continually cast upon worldliness, the rebukes he so freely dispensed to carnal ambition, and the spiritual obedience to God which he demanded on pain of eternal condemnation, did not suit his audiences, and stirred up their intensest hatred against him. It therefore became a study with his enemies, how to head off his influence, and bring him either to their interests, or into disgrace and trouble. Many were the expedients tried; but most remarkable of all, perhaps, was that which is described in the Gospel for this morning.

Without undertaking, at present, to enter into the exposition of all that was said and done, I propose now only to review somewhat the indications here given;

I. *With reference to what is in man;*
II. *With reference to what was in Christ.*

It is a very old, and a very true doctrine, that man is a very depraved being. Whatever may

have been its origin, or however it may be accounted for, it is a patent *fact*, "that all men who are naturally engendered, are conceived and born in sin; that is, they are all, from their mother's womb, full of evil desires and propensities." Some natural excellencies still linger in human nature, but there is everywhere, in the heart of man, a spring of evil, tainting and perverting his whole being, and ever tending to the production of a greater or less issue of evilness. In some it develops itself more offensively than in others, but in all it exists, and needs only time and favoring circumstances to exhibit itself in all alike. An illustration of that depravity, and of the height to which it is capable of rising, is furnished in the narrative before us.

1. Here was profession of great piety and holiness conjoined with very inexcusable hatred. The Pharisees were the strictest and most pretentious religionists of their day. They had their name from the fact that they claimed to be better, purer, and more faithful to the Divine teachings, than other people. They were strict to the last jot and tittle, tithing even mint, anise, and cummin, and prone to thank God that they were "not as other men." As touching the Law, they claimed to be blameless, and absolutely pure and righteous, even to the making of God their debtor. They ostentatiously went about to establish their own righteousness, blowing a trumpet before them to call attention to their almsdeeds, and choosing the market-places and the street corners to make long prayers, that the common herd of men might take

note and see what great and punctilious saints they were.

But great religiousness is no proof of genuine piety and a pure heart. People may profess, and be very zealous in their profession, and yet not *possess.* Satan himself often appears as an angel of light; and he has always had many very religious children. With all the devotion and pious zeal of these Pharisees, they could not bear Christ, and withstood him wherever they met him, and hated him in their souls. They could not refute his teachings; they could not gainsay his miracles; they could not establish anything against the purity and excellence of his life; but still they hated him, and, in the name of religion itself, opposed and persecuted him. He was not one of their kind; he did not belong to their party; and hence they could not endure him.

2. We observe here also a very base design. They "took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk." To meet a man openly and fairly, if we differ from him, is honest and honorable. No one is to be blamed for entertaining his convictions, provided he candidly brings them out into the daylight, and is willing to see the truth, and to accept it when it is seen. But to lay traps by which to catch an antagonist—to betray him—to bring him into disrepute by trickery and deceit—to put him at a disadvantage just for his own personal defeat without reference to the truth and right of the case—is a dastard business. If these men wished to test the relative merits of the

respective causes, they should have solicited a fair and open conference. They should have been willing to put in their own cause on equal ground with his, and to give full opportunity for a perfect understanding of the whole case. But, to set out from the start in the spirit of cavil, and with a studied aim to entangle and entrap him whilst they kept themselves and their motives concealed, was an outrageous dishonesty. And yet such is the human heart, and to such trickery and fore-studied baseness will it lead men even in the name of righteousness and religion.

3. We observe here also a very iniquitous co-partnership. The Pharisees and Herodians were radical enemies. They were fiercely opposed to each other on a politico-religious question. The Pharisees were strict Jews, who regarded the people of their blood as God's peculiar people, by Divine right exempt from all authority except such as had been ordained for them only, and hence enemies of the Roman Herodian government. In fact, they were subject to that government, but it was under rigid religious protest and resistance wherever resistance was possible. The Herodians, on the other hand, were those who, without scruple of conscience, accepted the situation, defended the Herodian government, and readily united with its administration. A Herodian, therefore, was next thing to an apostate, alien, and heathen to the Pharisees. They classed "publicans" with sinners, and with the most disreputable of the population. They held them as traitors

and dogs, and ordinarily avoided and despised them on the ground of their most cherished religious scruples. And yet, in this case, they sought them out, entered into bargain and collusion with them, and formed a peaceable copartnership by which the more successfully to execute a sinister and dishonorable purpose. Herod and Pilate, so long at enmity, made friends when the Holy One was to be put out of the way; and so the Pharisees could overlook their antagonism to the Herodians, and join hands with them, when a faithful religious teacher was to be entangled and brought into trouble, that they might have full scope for their selfishness, hypocrisy, and tyranny. Even their most religious scruples, and most cherished principles are conquered, silenced, laid aside, and thoroughly compromised, for the base end of entrapping and bringing into straits a teacher whom they did not like, whose character they could not impeach, and whose words they could not withstand. So it goes with men of low policy. With all their zeal and show of piety, they are dishonest at heart. And so depraved and hypocritical is human nature, that the most devout and highly taken antagonisms are simmered down into coalition to gratify its hatred to what stands in the way of its low and selfish ambition.

4. We observe here also a glib, obsequious, but treacherous and lying flattery. What they said of the Saviour was true enough in itself; but in the motive which induced it, and in the object which they had in it, it was hypocritical and devil-

ish. They did not mean to acknowledge the Saviour as the true Master, Rabbi, and infallible and impartial teacher of God's truth, which their words implied. Their design was to throw him off his guard; to make him believe they were meek and honest searchers for the truth; to have him think they were his admiring friends, ready at once to receive and abide by whatever answer he might give to their inquiries. "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth; neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, what thinkest thou?" Ah, full of all subtlety and deceit! How could they so dissemble? We can hardly conceive how they managed to speak the words. We would think that common conscience would have choked their utterance, filled their faces with confusion, and paralyzed their iniquitous tongues. But no; with the smoothness of untarnished innocence, with the assurance of confiding children, and with the loving voice of devout simplicity, they reverently laid their lying homage at the Saviour's feet! Wonder ye not that the earth did not open under them, and let them drop alive into the flames of hell!

5. Observe still further the devilish cunning of the plot. The question they submitted was: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?" They meant to fasten the Saviour between the horns of a dilemma under show of asking for authoritative instruction how to act in a case of civil duty in which they professed to be in honest doubt. If

he should answer *No*, then the Herodians would charge him with sedition, and the teaching of revolution against the government, whilst the Pharisees would have come in as impartial witnesses to the fact, and so bring him into condemnation. If he should answer *Yes*, then he would damage himself with the people, who were looking for deliverance from Cæsar's yoke, and the Pharisees would charge him with infidelity to Israel's sacred hopes and covenants. And for him to refuse to answer at all, would compromise his claims to be a trustworthy guide and teacher, whilst all would unite in denouncing him as a coward, a timeserver, and a hypocrite. The counsellors in the matter had studied the thing to perfection. They were sure they had now brought it to a pass in which it would be impossible for Christ to move, or not to move, without betraying himself into their power, or vastly damaging his reputation and his cause. To the Saviour, with his insight into their hypocrisy, and the mastery of wisdom at his command, the way out of the difficulty was simple and easy enough; but, to all human thinking, there could not have been a more subtle plot, or a more thoroughly elaborated dilemma. It was the very perfection of Satanic cunning and malicious deliberation, to disable and destroy celestial goodness incarnate.

Such, then, are the depths and capabilities of human depravity as shown in this text.

II.

We turn now to what we may learn from this narrative of the character of Christ. Two sets of qualities are here attested as possessed by him; first, such as relate to his character and reputation as a man; and second, such as relate to his superhuman qualities.

1. We are here shown that Christ was a very dignified man. He was poor, we know. He mingled mostly with the commoner class of people. But there was an imposing majesty going along with his humble simplicity. This is attested in the manner in which these Pharisees and Herodians addressed him. They never would have so humbled and belittled themselves as publicly to call a man Master, a teacher of the way of God, one above the influence of having men's persons in admiration, if he had not had the manner and dignity of one deserving to be so addressed. Though the intent of their words was treacherous, they were not spoken in mockery. They spoke as they did, because it was that sort of address which they felt to be most befitting to him; and what they spoke would not have been befitting towards him, if he was not a personage of high and impressive mien and commanding bearing. Jesus was humble, but he was dignified. He moved meekly among common people, but those who held themselves the highest, felt it to be due him to approach him as quite on a level with rab-

bis and doctors of the purest character and most worthy fame.

2. We here are shown that our Saviour had the reputation of a truthful man. These people never would have said of him, "*thou art true*," if such had not been the general impression concerning him. It is, indeed, a great thing to be said of a man. Very few there are who can be called true. Many are true to a certain degree—true in the absence of too severe a trial—true in some things in which not too much is demanded in order to be true. It is a common proverb, that every man has his price. The exceptions are very rare in which people cannot be bought. And those who cannot be bought with money, may after all be bought with something else. But our Saviour was not one of them. He had established for himself the character that he could not be bought. He was *true*, and even his worst enemies here bear witness to the fact.

3. He was also a man of acknowledged intelligence. He was never schooled in the learning and wisdom of this world. He sat at no Gamaliel's feet. He had gone through no Egyptian universities. And yet these enemies of his awarded him the title of *Διδάσκαλος*, and put him on a level with their learned Rabbis. Never in the world would they have done this, if they had not been made to feel that such was the common award of those who knew him, and that so they needed to regard him in order not to betray the hatred and ill design they had in their hearts.

4. He was, moreover, a man of honest faithfulness. He taught the way of God in truth, unswayed by the fear of men. This these Pharisees and Herodians attest. Even their hypocrisy was compelled to pay this homage to him or betray itself. He had been tested by the greatest adepts in the law, as well as by the common sense of those among whom he moved and taught; and with all the disposition and oft attempts to pick flaws in his doctrine, it had to be confessed that his utterances were faultless, and that what he taught was the pure truth of God, faithfully and truly presented. He rebuked and condemned where rebuke and condemnation were deserved; he told out justly wherein right religion and right life lay; and no man could show wherein he failed to present the way of God in truth. "Verily, verily," was the stamp borne by all he ever said.

But the subsequent parts of this narrative attest still higher qualities in our blessed Lord.

1. With all the dissimulation and consummate adroitness of these men, Jesus saw through the mask, and all their secret thoughts were naked and open unto him. He "*perceived their wickedness.*" And how were they astounded and confused, when, with the very first words of his reply, he laid open to the daylight all that they were carrying so deep-hidden in their treacherous hearts! "*Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?*" There was the whole story, fully told out in four words. They were hypocrites of the first water; and the object of their deceit was to entangle and entrap

him to whom they spoke. How did he know it? By what light could he thus penetrate into their secret souls, and lay bare their carefully covered infamy? We here encounter a wisdom and power not of earth. Here was a prescience which belongs only to the Spirit of God. Here was demonstration that "he needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." John 2: 25. Surely, it is not a mere man that we have for our Saviour.

2. He found an easy way out of the net from which human thinking believed it impossible for him to escape. Man's resources, after all, are not very great, nor man's wisdom very far reaching. Quite near and in hand are the means of putting it all to confusion. Little did these men suppose that they were carrying in their pockets the confutation of all their sinister schemes. The bold discovery of their hypocrisy and guilt was quite sufficient to deliver honorably from the dilemma, and to exempt from any necessity to answer to the question. But it was a question of some account, and there were principles underlying it which needed disentanglement and solution. The Saviour therefore did answer it, notwithstanding the ill intent of its presentation. And with a beautiful simplicity and grandeur, evidencing the teacher come from God, did he dispose of it. "Shew me the tribute money," said he. "And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then said he unto them,

Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

It was the doctrine of their own Rabbis, and the natural logic of the case, that the coin of a country determines who is its master. These men had all accepted Cæsar's coin, therefore were they in duty bound to Cæsar in what pertained to Cæsar. They claimed also to be very conscientious toward God, and, on the same principle, whatsoever had on it God's mark and superscription, that they were likewise in duty bound to render unto God. The question was more than solved. The bonds in which they thought they had him, completely dissolved before his touch, so that they could not but be amazed, and left him, and went their way, defeated, rebuked, and instructed.

Oh, it is a great, Divine, and mighty Saviour in whom we believe. He knows what is in man. He teacheth the way of God in truth. No devices framed against him can prosper. Able to help himself and maintain his cause against all antagonism, he is a competent leader and guide, and competent for all the necessities of the great work for which he came into the world. He is worthy of our faith and confidence in all things and at all times. Therefore let us trust in him, rely on his teachings, follow his precepts, and hope in his promises. He will never direct us wrong; and in him is everlasting salvation.

FESTIVAL OF THE REFORMATION.

Rev. 3 : 3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

THE Epistle to the Church in Sardis, from which these words are taken, has a very direct and special reference to the great Reformation which we this day commemorate. Whatever other applications this Epistle may have, I am clear in the conviction that the Reformers and their labors for the renewal of the almost suffocated Church are included. And as the Reformation was thus treated of by the Spirit of God fourteen hundred years before the Reformers were born, and commended to the attention of the churches by the Saviour himself, it is altogether a proper subject for the meditations of the sanctuary and the ministrations of the sacred desk.

And as it is a very great satisfaction to believers to find the Reformation really referred to in the Scriptures, it is equally comforting to find there, from the blessed Saviour himself, that Divine indorsement and commendation by which to assure ourselves with regard to it. There be some who proclaim it a grand apostasy, nothing more, and nothing less. There are others who represent it as

simply a great and deplorable schism, and describe it as a broken limb badly set, needing to be broken again in order to be set right. While still another class do not hesitate to speak and write about it as a mere political and external movement, which had no connection at all with the true life and essence of religion.

But, as surely as these seven Epistles to the seven churches contain Christ's estimate of his Church in its complete earthly career (without the acceptance of which this last Book of the New Testament will admit of no consistent interpretation), the great Reformation wears a very different character from all this in the eye of Heaven. In no other place in history can we locate the Sardian period of the Church's career; and from Christ's address to the Church in Sardis, we cannot but agree, that the principal features of that period were of the profoundest sort, and in deepest accord with the mind and will of God.* As to the principal leaders of that work, the unmistakable declaration is, that they defiled not their garments, that their names are favorably noted in heaven, and that they were worthy of Christ and his heavenly honors. The Saviour almost names those great-souled men, and seems almost to sign with his own hand the Protest of Spire and the Confession of Ausburg. As to the doctrines on which that mighty movement proceeded, he gives them his clear commendation, and in effect reiterates

* See my Lectures on the Apocalypse, vol. i, *in loc.*

them from the throne of his glory. And though he finds fault with much that ensued, and rebukes the neglect of what was then so gloriously restored, and pronounces against the degeneration which soon came in to mar and deaden the beauty and life of the great work, he does not fail to characterize its agents as pure, and its principles as right. Nay, the text is his own admonition to the inheritors of that cause, giving them his special directions with reference to the whole thing. It is a word from heaven to the Children of the Reformation, commanding us to remember how we have received and heard, and to hold fast, and repent. And as this is the day set apart in the Protestant Church for the commemoration of that great achievement, let us endeavor to improve the occasion to the end for which this command of our Lord was given.

I. Let us endeavor to get a clear idea of the great points in that mighty controversy; and

II. Let us endeavor to ascertain the precise duties to which the Saviour admonishes in the case.

And may the Holy Ghost help us in our contemplations, that we may both learn and obey the truth!

1. You often hear it stated as the great central element of all true Christian doctrine, as that which involves everything else in our faith, and as that which lay at the deepest heart of the great Reformation, that *man is justified by faith.* It is by and with this one point that the Church must ever

stand or fall. Where this doctrine is, and lives in the hearts of men, there the Church of Christ is; and where this doctrine is not, there is no true Church, and no salvation.

But what is that doctrine? What do we mean when we say that a man is justified by faith? We mean by it, that every man is a sinner, born under condemnation, and utterly incapable, by his own works and merits, to recover himself from the curse of the law, or to extricate himself from everlasting perdition. We mean by it, that there is not a human being living, who is not innately a child of wrath, and forever undone so far as any powers of his can serve him. We mean by it, that we are all dead in trespasses and sins, and so dead that we never can live again except by the merit and grace of a competent Mediator, who shall undertake our cause for us. We mean by it, that in this lost and ruined condition, God sent forth his only begotten Son to be our Redeemer, who took upon him our nature, restored to us a right knowledge of God, died the accursed death in our stead, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, wrought out and fulfilled in his own person, as a means of covering our guilt, satisfying the law, and recommending us to the Divine favor. We mean, that there is no hope whatever for man but that which is found in this mediatorial work of our Lord Jesus, exclusive of any worthiness, works, merits, or doings on our part. And we mean, furthermore, that this satisfaction, deliverance, atonement, and salvation which our adorable

Redeemer has wrought, is availing in, to, and for us, on the one, lone, and simple condition, that we believe and trust in Christ as our Saviour and hope; that without any foregoing, attendant, or subsequent works of ours, we are accepted of God, forgiven, saved, and made the heirs of eternal life, simply when and as we take and rest in Christ as our adequate and ever-living Lord and Saviour.

You thus recognize at once the very heart and marrow of that Gospel in which we hope, without which our entire religion would instantly dwindle into almost nothing. And this was the deepest and the all-conditioning doctrine in the heart of Luther. He had learned it amid the consuming fires of anxiety, fear and suffering for the safety of his own soul. Fasting, faint, and dying in the cell to which he had suddenly retired for peace for his troubled conscience, it was suggested to him by an old monk, out of the writings of St. Bernard. It flashed upon him through a text of holy Scripture, which came to his mind as he was climbing on his knees by way of penance up Pilate's staircase at Rome, and took such root in him that he felt as if he had been born over again, and this time ushered into the very paradise of God. "From that hour," he says, "I saw the Holy Scriptures with other eyes. And this text of St. Paul, 'The just shall live by faith,' was to me the very gate of heaven." Thenceforward, through all his teachings, labors, controversies, preaching, and writing, this was the Gospel to which he clung. Like Paul, he would know

nothing but Christ and him crucified, appropriated by simple faith as the sinner's only hope. This gave him his peace, strength, and confidence, and nothing could ever dislodge it from its place in his heart. This was the point he made in the Theses which he nailed up on the church-door at Wittenberg against the infamous teachings of the flippant Tetzel; this was the central substance of the great Confession of Augsburg; and this was the inner life and substance of the whole Reformation controversy. Though the unmistakable doctrine of the apostles and prophets, it had become overlaid, obscured, put out of the way, and rendered almost entirely inert. The Church had become legalistic and ceremonial to the almost universal suppression of what was evangelical and spiritual. People had learned to lay more stress upon their own works, penances, prayers, abnegations, and sacrifices, than on the merit, death, and righteousness of the only Saviour; they had learned to think less of the evil of sin, than of the worth of money and the virtue of ceremonies. They had learned to trust more in the power of priests, saints, masses, relics, pilgrimages, and the number of their Ave Marias and Pater Nosters, than in Jesus Christ and his atoning work. And nearly all Christendom had slipped aside from this inmost substance of Christianity, and put a ruinous system of works, will-worship, penances, masses, indulgences, priestly ceremonies on earth, saintly intercessions in heaven, and purgatorial pains of hell. in the place of Christ's all-sufficient media-

torship, and simple, loving, confiding faith in him alone.

And the great primal office of the Reformation was, to bring back the true doctrine of forgiveness and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, to replant it in the mind and heart of Christendom, and to hold it forth again as the only Gospel of God, and the only hope of man. All the mighty agitation revolved around this one great point. It was the gist of the whole contest.

2. But with this, and essential to it, was the bringing forward of the Holy Scriptures as the direct, supreme, and only Rule of faith for all classes. It was the Word direct that kindled saving faith in Luther's heart. It was by the Word direct that his agonized soul came to the light. It was from the Word direct that he learned the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And it was to this selfsame Divine Word direct, self-interpreted according to the laws of language, that he made his constant and chief appeal, as the ultimate and unquestionable arbiter in all the great controversies which sprung up around him. There is no higher law than this. What God says, must needs be the end of the matter; not what men may say he says; not what popes and councils, though claiming to be infallible, may say he says; not what this doctor, or that, or Luther, or any one else, may say he says; but what he says himself, in his own words, in his own Book, direct to every one that has ears to hear; is the ultimate judge to which all popes,

councils, fathers, doctors, all men, and all writings are subject, and with whose deliverances each is bound to abide. There is no appeal from the Word of God. There is no court of interpretation, no constituted authority of exposition, to come between any man's conscience and what that Word of God says. What there is written, and by fair and just inquiry ascertained to be there written, is the absolute authority on all questions of doctrine and duty for the Church and for every one that lives. This certainly is the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning themselves. The Word is, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Is. 8 : 20. "This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." Josh. 1 : 8. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Deut. 4 : 2. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Heb. 2 : 1. And hence it was the great principle of Luther, as it is of all true Christians, that "the only rule and standard, according to which all doctrines and teachers alike are to be judged and tried, are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament."

It was not just so in the middle ages, and at the

time of the Reformation. The Scriptures existed, and by some they were diligently read and studied. Nor was the proper Christian doctrine of their place and authority exactly denied. From the times of the apostles to Luther's day, there was a continuous succession of men who devoted themselves to Bible study, and taught with more or less purity what it taught. Special prohibitions had indeed been laid upon the reading of God's word by the people; but there was no particular cause why they should be insisted on. The scarcity and costliness of copies of the Bible, prior to the discovery of printing, was a sufficient interdict, more effectual than popes or councils could lay. And whatever can be said in palliation, it is the fact, that the Bible, as such, was comparatively unknown at the time of the Reformation. Luther discovered it as by accident, and his first readings of it were in a measure as if by stealth. He was amazed to find that there existed so much more holy Scripture than was given out in the Gospels and Epistles for the various days. It was by his own personal searching of the word that he found the way of peace, and was set right with regard to the falsities and abuses which everywhere prevailed. It was his only weapon against Rome and its shameful abominations. And what had done so much for him, he longed above all things to put in every one's possession. The art of printing had just been discovered. The victories of the Turks had driven Greek scholars into Europe, who were teaching Greek learning to the

men of letters. A new and general interest in the languages in which the Scriptures were written had been awakened. And the high purpose took possession of Luther, to give to Germany a faithful version of the entire Bible in the common language of the people, that all could see, read, and judge for themselves. Holding to the doctrine that the Judge of all should be heard of all, and knowing well how much depended upon this, he executed the mighty work, gave to Germany its German Bible, and thereby showed and opened the way for that universal dissemination of the Word of God in all languages, to all people, which has since occurred.

But such a bringing forward of the holy Scriptures did not suit the papists of those times. It was too endangering to their claims and pretensions. It would show to the world how false was much of their teaching, how unfounded their assumptions, how anti-Christian their whole establishment, and so overturn their power. Eck, and the rest of the Pope's champions, were for conducting the argument between Rome and Luther on the basis of councils and decrees; but Luther would admit no authorities against God's own Word, or supplementary to it. His advocacy of the use of the Scriptures by the common people was specially offensive. Every effort was therefore put forth to hinder the dissemination of Bibles and Bible teachings. It was a leading point in the controversy, that the Protestants insisted on the sufficiency and absolute supremacy of the

Word, while the papists held to the necessity of church decrees and traditions to determine what the truth is, and what we are to believe in order to be saved. The canons and decretals were searched, and it was given as the settled law of the holy Roman Church, that for the people to have the Bible in their houses in the common language of the country, was a sin, punishable with fines, and equivalent to heresy. The great Council of Trent, in 1545–1563, with special reference to the principles of the Reformers, decreed, that, "Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience, that if the holy Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it, and that, therefore, without the written consent of the bishop or inquisitor *they must be neither read nor possessed.*"

Had the Reformation done nothing more than to emancipate the Word of God from such a thraldom, and to restore it to its rightful place and authority, it would deserve the everlasting thanksgiving to God of all good men.

3. Another great point in that mighty movement was, the assertion of the proper manhood and freedom of man. It seems to be inherent in the papal system to make its devotees dependents and slaves, having no will or mind of their own apart from so-called church authorities. That system makes the Pope the Vicar of Christ, and the rightful sovereign of the world, the lord of all consciences and all states, the possessor of the

keys to bind and loose for this world and the next, whose sublime power no men, or nations, are at liberty to question or dispute, on pain of God's curse and eternal damnation. It calls on kings and emperors to come and kiss his august feet, as the high and sovereign disposer of their crowns and estates on earth, and their fate in eternity. It pronounces its anathemas on all civil and religious liberty, and puts its chains around the bodies and souls of men, to bind them to its dictum, beyond all possibility of appeal from its absolute and infallible authority. As in the case of John of Milan, in the middle of the fourteenth century, it takes a crozier in one hand and a drawn sword in the other, and by pretended right of heaven to both, says, out to clergy and people, kings and subjects, "These are my arms, and with the one I defend the other."

True, the Romish system has never had sufficient power to realize all its claims and pretensions; but the Reformation fell upon a time when that system came the nearest to such a realization. It was a time when nations dared not move without the permission of the Pope, and men could neither think, believe, teach, or worship, except as the hierarchy should determine, lest they should be burned for blasphemy, or have their bones broken for heresy. It is the testimony of one of the greatest recent Roman Catholic writers, that "it is not incorrect to say, that Luther has been the restorer of liberty in modern times. If he did not create, he at least courageously affixed his

signature to that great revolution which rendered the right of examination lawful in Europe. And, if we exercise in all their plenitude at this day, this first and highest privilege of human intelligence, it is to him we are most indebted for it; nor can we think, speak, or write, without being made conscious, at every step, of the immense benefit of this intellectual enfranchisement. To whom do I owe the power of publishing what I am now inditing, except to this liberator of modern thought?" Nor is it too much to say, as I have elsewhere said, that "when Luther stood before the august Diet of Worms on trial for his faith, the liberties of the world trembled in his lone heart. And when he lifted up his hand before God, in the face of all Europe's potencies, and declared in solemn oath, that, unless convinced by clear testimonies of holy Scripture and solid reasons, he could not and would not retract, modern freedom drew its first breath, and independence once more began to pulsate in the arteries of man." Noble princes caught up the spirit, and, at the Diet of Spire, dared to deny the right of civil power to legislate in matters between the soul and God; dared to deny the right of the Pope and his minions to impose doctrines and rites contrary to the plain Word of Divine Revelation; dared to deny the right of any earthly authority to stifle the free utterance of truth, the full avowal of one's spiritual convictions, and the free worship of God according to one's own conscience in subordination only to the teachings of prophets and apostles. And so the freeborn

soul aroused itself from the sleep of ages, shook off the withes and bands which another Delilah had fastened on its limbs, and walked forth again in its native rights and powers, to meet the sunrise of a new era for our race.

Such are a few of the more important and vital points in the great controversy of the Reformation. Let us, then, *in the second place*, endeavor to ascertain the nature of those duties to which Christ admonishes us with reference to that great work. They are given in the text with much point and simplicity.

1. We are to remember how we have received and heard. It is a good thing to think back upon those days which tried men's souls, to mark their faith and labors, and to consider the legacy which has come to us through their testimony. It is always well to look after the old landmarks, and to seek out the old paths. It is thus, according to the prophet, that we find the good way in which to walk securely, and reach the blessed end in safety. It was through Luther and his colaborers that the true Gospel was exhumed, that the pure light was made to shine again, and that the only saving doctrine was presented afresh for the reception of mankind. It was not a new Gospel, but the old restored. It was not a new Church then first created, but the one only Church of God on earth purged of its dross, and brought out from under the dreadful tyranny that had grown up within it, and almost destroyed it. And in the teachings, catechisms, confessions, hymns, and

testimonies of the mighty men who led in that great renewal, the old and everlasting creed of Christians received an intonation the sublimest since the days of the apostles, and meant to be the guide and help of believers for all after time. It was with them that the ages divided, and just there, on the summit of the watershed, did God set up a light to shine on all the subsequent pathway of the race. What was then sounded forth by his eminent servants was the voice of prophets and apostles reuttered for our times and surroundings—the testimony of our God set in modern tongues and applications for all the modern ages. We cannot refuse to hear and heed it, and yet be Christians. We cannot set it aside, and yet hope for salvation. And therefore must we ever recur again and again to those times, those men, and their confessions. In a word, we must remember and lay to heart how we have received and heard.

2. And what was thus pronounced and given us, we are to *hold fast.* The great controversy of the Reformation period is not yet ended. The questions which it raised, are still living questions, and the mightiest and most momentous with which this world has to do. The question as to what the true way of salvation is, whether by simple faith in Christ Jesus, or by saintly intercessions and added doings of our own, is still disputed by the same old enemy, and by others who have taken sides with her in this, whilst they pretend to hate and oppose her. The question as to the place, worth, and use of the holy Scriptures, and whether

it is subject to the Church, and to be supplemented by councils and traditions, or God's supreme law of faith and life to every individual man, is still disputed to-day in every nation where papists dwell, who cannot even consent to live in peace where the laws do not exclude the Bible from the schoolhouse. And as to the question of human liberty, the right of free speech, free conscience, and free government, there thunders out, from a decrepit old man at Rome, a list of multiplied anathemas against all the groundworks and principles of modern society, threatening all men with the pains of hell, who cannot believe him infallible, and will not cringe to him as the lawful and supreme divine dictator for all this universal world. Nor is there a truth or principle inherited from the Reformation, or an inch of ground we hold as evangelical Christians, that is not disputed to this very hour, and disputed with a fierceness and malignity that is everywhere menacing the peace of nations, and would not hesitate to deluge the world in blood, if there were the least hope that our Gospel and our freedom could thus be destroyed from the face of the earth. Satan has not yet surrendered. His hatred of the truth has not yet died. His accusations of the saints have not yet ceased. His master instrument against the liberties of the world has not yet been cast aside as useless. Antichrist has not yet been consumed. The great contest still goes on. Many, weary of the everlasting strife, have given up the conflict, and deserted to the foe. And the danger is, that,

in our love of peace and charity, we may yield our precious Gospel to the plausible fallacies of our adroit and ever-active enemy, and lose, in an unguarded hour, all that the Reformation won. Therefore the sacred word of Jesus to every child of that Reformation is, "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and *hold fast.*" The sacred principles of that great renovation, "*hold fast.*" The blessed Bible which that mighty contest tore loose from its chains and gave to men in their own tongue, "*hold fast.*" The songs, and hymns, and great confessions in which the Spirit of faith and truth put itself forth in that wonderful resurrection, "*hold fast.*" The liberty of free judgment, free worship, and a free Church, owning no sovereign but Jesus and his word, "*hold fast.*" Your faith and hope in the one only Mediator between God and man, as competent and all-sufficient without further need of sacrificing priests on earth or interceding saints in heaven, "*hold fast.*" Though you are branded as heretics, anathematized as rebels against God, disowned as the ill brood of apostasy, and despised as enemies of the immortal King, "*hold fast.*" And though the days of persecution should return, and your way lie through conflict, blood, and fire, "*hold fast.*" By all that is sacred in life; by all that is precious on earth; by all that is dear to a soul that knows its rights, its dignity, and its redemption, "*hold fast.*" It is the word of the Saviour as he walks in glory in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and who alone is able to uphold in the day of trial; and let

it sink into the inmost being, and lodge there forever—"HOLD FAST."

3. But the results of the Reformation were not just what they should have been. The outcome of the blessed movement was not complete. Its work was not perfect before God. It certainly was not a thorough success as to the Romanists. It had its salutary effect even upon them. The Romish communion has never been the same debased, immoral, and corrupt thing since the Reformation, that it was before. Its essential nature has not changed. Its general principles are the same; but every papist on earth has reason to thank God that ever Luther lived. His situation in every way is better because of the Reformation which his Church so bitterly condemns. Without it there would indeed be no dispute about the Bible in the public schools, for there would be no schools to give occasion to such dispute, and no Bible to dispute about. Without it there would be no controversy with the principles of free government, and no war with modern liberty, for there would have been none to fight. And if the Inquisition has now been abolished; if capital punishments and torture for opinions and variant beliefs, have disappeared from the civilized world, and if men may now live and worship, and governments exist, and people follow their own consciences in faith and duty, without asking the gracious permission of the Pope and his hirelings, it is all owing to the Reformation. But the Romish church as a body refused to profit to the full by

the revived Gospel, still held on to her most dangerous errors, and set herself stoutly against the confessors of the exhumed truth of God, as she still does to this day and hour. The work was not perfect.

And even with regard to those who escaped from the old bondage and impurities, and in the new phase which the Church assumed from their labors, the results were not just according to the mind, will, and word of God. The Church Reformed did not actualize the life to which it was called, nor fulfil the name by which it was baptized. It did not maintain the vitality which it professed, and whence its restoration came. The things which it had taken in hand to conserve, it did too much depart from and neglect. Its first great leaders were pure and noble, and its principles were right and true; but its fruits were marred with imperfections, and its intentions were not justly fulfilled. Re-Reformers sprung up, the spirit of sect obtruded itself, fanatical revolutions broke in, Protestant ultraism did not hesitate at what would sever the historic continuity of the one only Church of God on earth, rival altars were set up on points of difference for which no such severances can be justified, people began to be satisfied with churches built on the idiosyncrasies and fanatical conceits of men, the life of the grand old Confessions was ground out by the controversies about them, faith became more a thing of words than of life, a cold and conceited rationalism succeeded as the only solvent of the problem

of man's religious needs and disputes, whilst over against it was only a subjective pietism, too creedless to be wholesome, and too indifferent to the outward to save the good it had from damaging exposure and evaporation. The result of all has been, a mingling of good and evil, truth and error, faith and folly, life and death, and the one so interfering with the other, that Protestantism, as now exemplified in the world, is about as poor an ideal of the proper Church of Christ as we could well conceive outside of Rome itself.

And hence it is that we have still another and very important word from Christ in regard to this matter. We are not only to remember how we have received and heard, and hold fast, but we are also commanded to "*repent.*" Repent of what? Not of the doings of those mighty men to whose profound faith and earnest labors the world owes the restored Gospel. From heaven we have it that they were persons who defiled not their garments, and who are worthy to walk with Christ in white. Not of their principles, teachings, and confessions, for the same words exhort us to hold fast what we have thus received and heard. Nor yet of our devotion to the cause for which they toiled and risked their lives; for this is inculcated as one of the things entering into a state of readiness for the coming of our Lord, and by which our names are to be continued in the book of life. What, then, have the children of the Reformation to repent of? The text does not fail to indicate the answer. There has been too little remembrance

of how we have received and heard. There has been too little regard had to the spirit, faith, testimony, and calling of the holy men, raised up of God to reannounce his Gospel to the world. There has been too little firmness in holding to the true and only evangelic positions in which they planted themselves. And there has been too little steadfast devotion to the spirit and life of the word as by them set forth. Instead of building on the foundations on which they built, many have sought to lay other foundations, and to build with other materials, and to do the work over again as not half done by those whom God raised up to do it. Sectism, with its half-truths and heresies; formalism, ever busy with the mere shell while it lets the kernel perish; fanaticism, which can see no good in anything but its own shallow conceits; libertinism and licentiousness, adorning themselves with the holy names of charity and freedom; creedless and unbelieving humanitarianism, thinking to redeem the world by doctoring at its ills apart from its Divine and only Saviour; evangelism, which disowns allegiance to the provisions of the only inspired Evangely; and a thousand forms of embodied selfishness and goodish entrenchments on the old faith and order of the Church, so rife under the Protestant name: all these are things to be mourned over, regretted, and corrected, if the children of the Reformation are ever to get back into that Divine favor in which those stood to whom we refer as our fathers.

I have repeatedly said that the great problem

of our time is the rechristening of Christendom. Rome certainly needs it, and so does much that passes under the name of Protestantism. Men are talking of the speedy conversion of the world; when in truth the very instruments by which it is proposed to accomplish it are themselves largely in need of conversion, and have not yet touched the nerve of genuine Christianity. There is much religiousness, but very little true religion. There is a widespread form of godliness, and much earnest feeling after the truth, but clearness and power are fearfully lacking. Converts are counted by the thousand, but to what they are converted no one can exactly tell us. Even the foundation principles of virtue and morals do we find assailed and set aside in the name of religion, while each expects to be saved by doing what seemeth right in his own eyes, whether with, or without, reference to any God, or word or law of God, outside of his own miserable imaginings. REPENTANCE, therefore, is the word—Repentance out of all such wide wanderings from the old paths, and such emptiness and unchristianisms as disfigure the religious aspects of our times. We must bethink ourselves, and remember how we have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. We must go back to the fountain heads, and drink in the pure waters at their source. We must betake ourselves again to the names which defiled not their garments, and to the men whom Jesus pronounces worthy to walk with him in white. And if we cannot find the truth there, and may not

rest with confidence and hope in the testimonies by them given, then have the foundations perished, and there is no resting-place to be found any more for poor sin-wearied man. There is no God but the God they confessed; no holy Scripture but that which they received and re-gave to the world; no Christ but the Christ of their confession, hope, and trust; no means of grace but those which they used, and insisted on having used; no promises or conditions of Divine acceptance but those which they put before men for their comfort. And if, in accord and unity with them, there be no salvation, there is none for man.

Here, then, we rest, giving thanks to the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sublime inheritance which he hath given unto us.

A mighty Fortress is our God,
A trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from every need
That hath us now o'ertaken.
The old murderer still
Means us deadly ill;
Dreadful arms he bears,
Great might and many snares,
And none on earth can match him.

By strength of ours can naught be done,
Defeat were soon effected;
But for us fights the Valiant One
Whom God himself elected.
Name Him reverently,
Christ the Lord is He,
King of Sabaoth,
True God and Saviour both;—
He holds the field triumphant.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATT. 9 : 18–34. While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead : but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment :

For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

He said unto them, Give place : for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.

And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him : and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this ? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

And their eyes were opened ; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

As they went out, behold they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

THE Gospel for this morning, with the verses immediately following, which I include in the text, is singularly pictorial, and presents us with sketches and illustrations of much beauty, impressiveness, and instruction.

I. *We have here four cases of suffering, showing the calamitous state of this earthly life of ours.*

The first is *a case of death*, in the person of the daughter of a distinguished Jewish official. "While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead." Mark and Luke speak of the same case, and give the man's name. He was not so much a civil officer, as a religious one—"a ruler of the synagogue,"—but manifestly a man of note and consequence. High station, and the good esteem of men, however, are no security against domestic trouble. Sickness, death, and sorrow visit the houses of the wealthy and the palaces of the great, as freely as any others. Neither are the young, the beautiful, and the tenderly beloved, any more exempted from the approaches of disease and death, than the elderly and the less favored. Many more people die young than in mature life. And here

was a great man in trouble. His dear child was a corpse, and his whole house was in confusion and grief. Luke tells us that the child was "about twelve years of age," and a general favorite; for many were found at the house when the Saviour came thither, "and all wept and bewailed her."

The second is a case of *chronic disease*, in the person of "a woman having an issue of blood twelve years." Her ailment, whatever may have been its particular character, was one of much annoyance and sore affliction. She had been at great pains to find a remedy for it, and "had spent all her living upon physicians," "and suffered many things;" but "was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." Her case, at the time to which the text relates, was pitiable in the extreme: without health, without means of subsistence, excluded by the nature of her suffering from the public ordinances of religion, shunned as unclean, helpless, and sinking into the last stages of despair.

The third is a case of *blindness*, in the persons of two men who cried after the Saviour, beseeching him to have mercy upon them. Their situation, if anything, was worse than that of the woman. To have to spend life in perpetual midnight, which no stars relieve and no candle can light up, presents a form of being of peculiar sadness. Little as we may think of it, nothing can compute the blessedness of sight; and to lose it, is to lose more than can be told—to be disabled in half of our being. How affecting the song of

the blind Milton, where he tells of his sad privation!

> "Seasons return; but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of even and morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
> But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me: from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
> Presented with a universal blank
> Of Nature's works, to me expunged and razed,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out!"

The fourth is a case of *demoniacal obsession*, in the person of "a dumb man possessed with a devil." There is such a thing as being possessed by evil spirits—such a coming under the power of Satan, that his demons enter the body, seat themselves in the vital centres of our physical organization, and affect and control the powers in various horrible and afflictive ways. Many such cases were brought to the Saviour for his merciful intervention when on earth. They never came themselves. The evil spirits knew too well the power of Christ and their subjection to his condemnation, to allow those upon whom they had seized to go seeking for relief from such a source. But not always in the same form did they impose their malignity. Sometimes they deprived of reason; sometimes they inflamed with fierce passions; sometimes they destroyed sensibility and will, inflicting all varieties of nervous and epileptic troubles. In this case the infesting demon had deprived the man of the power of speech. The

tongue is sometimes "set on fire of hell;" but it is also sometimes bound of hell, and all ability to use it taken away. And though, Matthew Henry says, one had better be a dumb devil than a blaspheming one, it is a great and terrible affliction for a man to be so enslaved as to be a devil at all, or to have the imps of hell either to run the tongue, or to tie it up in silence. Speech is a great gift, and, to have it hopelessly taken away from us, is a great and grievous calamity, especially if to the privation is added the consciousness that it is the presence of a demon of perdition in us that is the cause.

Why there has always been so much suffering in the world, we cannot fully explain. We know that it is all the fruit of sin, but still there hangs a mystery about it which we cannot fathom. Much is doubtless owing to people themselves. They disregard nature's beneficent laws, violate the rules of health, run into various excesses, and so bring upon them nature's inevitable penalties. Lives of indulgence and unwisdom are pursued, and disease, suffering, disability, and untimely death are the result. Temperance, prudence, care, and proper watchfulness, will ward off many bodily ailments and many a painful experience. But there is a vast realm of ills and afflictions which is not at all under the control of human will or wisdom. Bad parentage is apt to entail a bad estate, from which children suffer without possibility of escape. Much constitutional infirmity, and many disadvantages in social position, and a

large amount of grief and trial, thus come upon multitudes without their personal fault.

Yet, suffering is not without its good. Its moral effects, if rightly viewed and treated, and even in spite of man's perverseness, more than compensate for all its pangs and disadvantages. There is salutary discipline in it, both for this world and the next. A tree that never feels the weight of storms and winter's pinching frosts, will be of flabby fibre. The clay, to become a vessel of honor, must be dug out of its quiet with instruments of iron, ground in the mill, twirled on the wheel, and baked in the fires. The polished pillar, which stands in beauty in the temple, has had to feel the weight of many a blow, and the edge of many a sharp instrument. The blade which glitters on the hero's side, has come through many a heated blast, felt many a heavy stroke, and quivered under the rasp. The jewel which flashes in the crown of royalty had to be cut and rubbed by the torturing processes of the lapidary, in order to such an exaltation. The finest gold that makes up the wealth of empires, had to pass through the crucible to be freed from its dross. And so the Great God takes men through a world of trial and suffering to fit and temper them for the greater enjoyment of their own being and himself. It is his school of sorrow for a better life.

II. *We have here Christ's treatment of these several sufferers, showing what a glorious Redeemer God has sent us.*

None of these cases were too hard for him. The grief of the bereaved ruler he completely charmed away. The dead child he brought back to life again. The poor disabled woman's infirmity was instantly and completely cured. The sightless eyeballs of the two blind men were made to flash with light, and given a power of vision as clear as any are wont to possess. And the demon in the dumb man was cast out, and the sufferer enabled to speak as other men.

With infinite ease, also, did he perform these wonders. The disease of twelve years vanished at the mere "touch" of his garment. He merely took the dead girl by the hand, and called to her, "and her spirit came again, and she arose straightway." He simply put his fingers on the blind men's eyes, and said, "According to your faith be it unto you; and their eyes were opened." And in the case of the dumb demoniac, relief and speech came so unexpectedly that no notice is taken of any visible effort whatever. The man was brought to him, and, no sooner was he brought, than he was cured, and "spake." Virtue seemed to drop out of Christ—to inhere in his very clothes—to radiate from him as light from a burning candle—to master and heal what baffled all the skill and power of man.

Out of the purest benevolence and condescension also did he dispense these favors. At the time this series of miracles began, he was engaged at a great feast, made in his honor, at the house of Levi the publican. Many distinguished and

admiring friends had been called to meet him there. Yet he was willing to leave all and go from the house of feasting to the house of mourning in answer to the prayer of Jairus. He was grandly escorted on the way from the banquet of an official of state to the residence of an official of religion. Capernaum had a guest worthy of its honor, and "much people followed" in that triumphal procession. In among the crowd crept the poor diseased woman, shrinking from every gaze, but nerved with one last despairing resolve, saying within herself, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." And the moment that touch was made, he stopped, and "turned him about." He knew and felt that some poor soul was there concealed, seeking for his saving virtue. He must halt even the great procession to honor such lowly faith, and to speak the word of healing comfort to that poor seeker, though others might see nothing but pollution in such a contact. Only the most disinterested commiseration could have induced such attention, to such a subject, at such a time. And so in each of the other cases, there was the most condescending attention, accepting of no remuneration, and charging that what he had done should not be trumpeted abroad. He desired neither money nor fame, but sought to avoid both, only so that the griefs of sufferers were healed, and men taught to honor the Divine source whence all help and healing comes.

Yet it was not altogether without conditions

that he gave forth his wonderful grace. The woman was healed, not merely because she touched his garment, but because there was embodied in that touch a most unquestioning confidence in his healing power. And that there might be no mistake about the matter, he turned to her and said, "Daughter, be of good comfort, *thy faith* hath made thee whole." Others came in contact with his garments, but no virtue went out to them, for the reason that the receptivity of faith was not there, seeking, looking, and waiting for it. When the affliction of Jairus was to be relieved, the word to him was, "Be not afraid, only *believe*." Before the blind eyes were made to see, he demanded of the men, "*Believe ye* that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord." And "*then*" touched he their eyes, and *according to their faith* it was unto them. And the same condition is implied on the part of those who brought the poor tongue-bound demoniac. Their confidence was like that of the ruler, the woman, and the blind men, or they never would have so come, and the deliverance would not have been given. Christ's healing powers go out according to established laws. Where there is no faith, we find no miracles, no salvation. Even concerning his own town, we read, that "he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Where faith fails, there grace retires; but where the soul opens to him, and stretches forth the imploring hand, and sees the power and goodness to bestow what it craves, there is the inner contact with the Prince

of peace which draws his redeeming virtue into itself, as the rod pointed to the sky draws the lightning from the cloud.

Many, indeed, are the ailments and infirmities of this nature of ours. Humanity is diseased, blinded, possessed, paralyzed in right speech, bereaved, and ever mourning over comforts fled. It is secretly disordered and defiled, and openly afflicted and depressed. It has been so for six thousand years. The doctors are many, and much is spent upon them, but their remedies do not avail. Legislators, philosophers, moralists, reformers, and all sorts of people, with all sorts of nostrums and specifics, have again and again undertaken the case, but only to make the patient poorer in resources and more hopeless in spirit. Men have tried everything—every mode of life—every torturous application—every soothing sweetness—every style of earthly regimen and prescription—but all with the same disappointing results.

> No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,
> Nor hyssop branch, nor sprinkling priest,
> Nor rolling brook, nor flood, nor sea,
> Could wash the dismal stain away!

The case needs a heavenly Physician—one possessed of the power of God—one himself above the touch of defilement or infection—one with a heart and hand to condescend to the poor and weak—one to come freely into the streets and houses where the ailers dwell, to encourage their applications, to answer to their touch, and to let

his saving virtue forth wherever there is the wish and confidence to receive it. And such a Saviour is that which this series of miracles discloses to our view. Here is a man, a God-man, for whom no case is too desperate, no time too late, no season too inopportune, no poverty too disabling, no condescension too great, if only there be the motion of faith to touch his garment, implore his help, and reach forth to take his deliverance. There is not a sin which he is not prepared to blot out, nor a weakness he cannot remove, nor an uncleanness he cannot wash away, nor a blindness he cannot illuminate, nor a tongue that hell has made speechless that he cannot set at liberty, nor a daughter, son, or brother, whom he cannot call back from death and restore to the circle of fellowship and love. Yea, according to his ancient promise, God hath sent us a Saviour, and a great one, and with him is everlasting deliverance to every one that believeth. (Is. 19 : 20.)

III. *We have here an account of various affections of mind with regard to Christ, showing what to avoid and what to follow if we would be partakers of his saving grace.*

The first I notice is an affection of *unbelief.* This is specially displayed by those in the house of Jairus, of whom these three things are said: they "wept and wailed greatly," they "laughed Christ to scorn," and they "were astonished with a great astonishment." And here are the universal characteristics of unbelief.

It thinks itself wiser than it is. Christ said the child was not so dead but he could easily arouse her; but they knew better, and laughed at him as a fool. And this is what ails the multitudes of unChristians to this day. They take up impressions and flattering half-truths, and are at once so wise in their own conceits, that Christ and the Scriptures are nowhere. They know better than that the world was made in six days; they are sure Moses knew where the Red Sea could be waded without a miracle; his long stay in the mountain is proof enough for them that he chiselled out those tables of the law himself. Well, yes, perhaps Jesus was a good man and great teacher, but not above the mistakes of men, and not to be relied on as an infallible guide for our times, much less as an atoning Saviour and eternal King; death is too entire a dissolution of the body to think of its future resurrection, and if there be a hereafter, it is for the soul alone; nor will the beneficent Power that made us leave any of his creatures to eternal exile. And as to faith and sacraments, it is all doubtful, to say the least, if not mere priestcraft and superstition! So they speak and dream; and in the pride of their sensual wisdom, put from them the only true Gospel, and even God himself.

The same is disposed to ridicule all it does not understand. Things must square to its conceits and come within its power to see through them, or they are only absurd. These mourners of Capernaum could not perceive how that breathless

and frigid corpse could ever be awakened from such a sleep, and therefore they laughed at the Son of God. Nothing is more sarcastic, or proudly vaunting, than unbelief. If it cannot construe things to its narrow and material round of think ing, they are ridiculous and impossible. With great pretensions to knowledge, reason, soberness, and dignity, it is the silliest, the most inconsistent, the most presumptuous, and the meanest, of all mental conditions. It laughs to scorn the very wisdom and power of the Almighty.

But it is comfortless under bereavement. This weeping and wailing was not all formality and sham. There was some reality, even if much of it was hired for the occasion. The ruler felt, and the servants of the ruler felt, and the friends and neighbors of the family felt; for everything betokens a deep and widespread interest in the child. But now she was dead, and those who could ridicule Christ still had no consolation without him. So it was with Hume's mother, whom he had turned away from her Bible and her Christ, when she came to stand face to face with death. And so it was with Voltaire, Gibbon, and Paine; and so it is always with unbelief. It may do well enough for people to live by in prosperity; but when bereavement and death come, the charm ends, the reed breaks, the consolation is gone, and there is nothing but great weeping and hopeless wailing.

Nay, further, sneering unbelief is sure to be overwhelmed at the last. The word that these people

laughed at soon resolved itself into fact. Jesus, though scorned, failed not to make his declaration good. The maid was not dead beyond his power to awake her, and he proved it by presenting her alive. And then "*they were astonished with great astonishment.*" Ah, there's a day coming, when a surprise shall seize on them that now stand off in scornful unbelief, beyond all they ever dreamed or conceived. What they deny and ridicule now, they will presently behold as tremendous realities. The silly pride of intellect, the contemptuous laugh of scorn, the cold indifference and consequential unconcern of unbelief, cannot unmake the power or purposes of God; neither will they hinder what he gives out as his intentions. And they that content themselves with the skeptic's comfort now, will yet encounter the hour when their eyes will open in an amazement and horror from which there is no more recovery. The old world knew better than Noah, and laughed at the folly of the old preacher of righteousness; but what he told them, they afterwards beheld to their everlasting dismay. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah made light of the warnings of Lot, and sported at his anxieties; but they soon saw, and wondered, and perished. And when the King Almighty comes to perform that word, not one jot of which can ever pass unfulfilled, woe be to the men who scouted it as an empty myth! Imagine the atheist suddenly confronting the Everlasting One to be judged for all his hard speeches against his Creator! Imagine the deist called up from his grave,

arrayed in shame, standing before the omniscient Jesus to receive sentence for all the ill he hath done, and thought, and said, in his earthly lifetime! Imagine the materialist compelled to see Hades opened, and myriads of souls issuing to put on again their corporeal clothing, and he himself dragged forward by an uninterupted existence to the awards of an immutable eternity! Ah, where now is that proud scorn, that deriding laugh, that sarcastic ridicule, that lighthearted jest, with which God's holy word was treated, his Gospel thrust aside, his Name abused, his judgment contemned! Oh, ye men of unfaith, consider; the day is coming when you will be "astonished with great astonishment."

I notice also an affection of *violent and base antagonism*. The Pharisees, seeing the dumb demoniac relieved, and compelled to admit the presence of a mighty miracle, malignantly stifled and quashed their most religious convictions, revolutionized all their most approved methods of reasoning, and said, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils!" The height and intensity of this hatred to Christ astounds me. I scarcely know how to take it in. I can understand how Saul of Tarsus, in his ignorance, could bend the energies of his great nature against Christ and the Church. I can understand how the brave Peter, with all his knowledge and conviction, could, in a moment of surprise, perplexity, and darkness, deny his Lord. But that men, with all Peter's knowledge and conviction, could press their resistance with

all the unrelenting rigor, zeal, and perseverance of a persecuting Saul, I am at a loss to comprehend. It is a mystery of iniquity which the Saviour elsewhere pronounces forever unpardonable. And yet, for such malignity human nature is capable; nor is it perhaps as rare among the hearers of the Gospel now as we may think. To persecute Christ in ignorance, is shame and sin enough; but men there be who know, and are convinced in their deepest souls, of the truth of the Gospel, and yet withstand it, oppose it, and against all their convictions and better knowledge stand arrayed with its foes. And well for them, if they have not already crossed the line beyond which there is no more salvation. Such stifling of conviction and suppression of light is, at the least, a far advance toward that sin against the Holy Ghost, which Jesus says can never be forgiven, either in this world or the next. Happy they who keep themselves from such a depravation!

Still another affection is here brought to view, that of a *mere transient impression.* The multitudes were filled with admiring astonishment at the Saviour's power, and said, "*It was never so in Israel!*" While they heard him speak, and saw his grand works of mercy, they were full of enthusiasm, and shouting of laudations. But their zeal was like the morning cloud and the early dew. It did not last. And this is the great fault still. Many are ready to espouse Christ's cause, and start out with wondrous fervor in his service; but

it is the noise of the shallow water—the quick upspringing of the seed that falls where the soil is thin. The stream runs off, and the zeal subsides; the sun ascends the heavens, and the crop withers away. They hear a sermon, and are impressed, and are bent on doing great things; they go forth into the world, and it is all forgotten. With great sincerity they come to vow allegiance to Jesus as their everlasting Lord; and in a few years we see them no more, and their places among God's people are vacant. One would once have thought them model Christians, but, before life is half over, they have proved themselves the children of the devil. Alas for such a piety! No man can be saved but he who holds the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end!

There is yet one other affection here brought out which must not be forgotten. It is the state or affection of *earnest seeking*. Jairus came saying, "I pray thee come and lay thy hand upon my daughter and she shall live." He knew there was no other hope, and he was urgent for the Saviour's help. The sick woman pressed through the crowd, and exerted all her remaining strength to get to the Saviour, saying within herself, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." The blind men "followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." In all these cases there was a despairing sense of need, an humble, but full confidence in Jesus, and a prompt and persevering endeavor to obtain his gracious help. It was the way the Syrophœnician woman con-

quered; and it was the way of blessed success in these instances.

So, then, are we to be affected toward Jesus, to get his great salvation. We can do nothing toward working the relief. Whatever is effected he must do; and the glory of it is all his own. But, enlightened by his word and Spirit, we can pray, as the sorrowing ruler prayed; we can put forth our hand of faith and touch his garment; we can cry to him as the two blind men cried; and with the faith of others coworking with our own we may enlist the saving energy that shall set us free. Our eyes cannot reach him, but our prayers can. Our hands cannot touch him, but our spirits can. And by the means which he has constituted, we may so plant our feet upon the promises, and so lay our hands upon the throne, that all his redeeming power shall flow into us, and deliver us forever!

Art thou bereaved? Has death been in thy home and stricken down the object of thy fondest love? Go lay thy grief at Jesus' feet, and learn from him that death is nothing but a transient sleep soon followed by a glorious waking, and sorrow no more as those which have no hope. Art thou worn down with long disease, thy substance wasted, thy hope destroyed? Go press thy way to the presence of Jesus, who can be touched with the feeling of thine infirmity, and through whose garment flows the healing remedy for all thy ailment and uncleanness. Art thou in darkness, blind, disabled, helpless in thy lack of light? Go call on Jesus,

whose fingers are ready to touch thy sightless eyes and give thee everlasting light. Hath Satan bound thee with his bands and withes, disabled thy life, and tortured thee with his malignity? Come into the presence of Jesus, and at his exorcising word, thy bonds shall drop, and thy silent tongue be loosed to speak his holy praises. And whatever the distress or need may be, go thou to Jesus, who came into this world for thy help, and with whom is plenteous redemption. Only go to Jesus. He has the power. He has the generosity. He is preached to thee for this very purpose. He has his great office just to meet such cases. And nothing is more agreeable to his will than that poor sufferers should come to him, and take the relief he is so able and so willing to give.

Great God! beam on this mirror Thy pure Spirit's light;
And in it let us see, as we devoutly wish to see,
Ourselves, the world, and Thee, and Thy blest Son aright!

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATT. 24 : 15–28. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand) : then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains : let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house : neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days ! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day : for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there ; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders ; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth : behold, he is in the secret chambers ; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

ALL the appointed Lessons for the closing portion of the Church-Year, refer to some one or the other of the last things. Having looked at the great facts of the redemption-work, the rise and progress of the Kingdom of God in the soul and in the world, and the doctrines and duties therewith connected, our eyes are turned towards the final consummation, and the grand termination of all. The pas-

sage now before us accordingly points to the sunset of the world, and calls to the contemplation of the character and signs of the mysterious close of time.

Our Saviour had just been discoursing to a mixed multitude in the temple, reproaching the scribes and Pharisees with their hypocrisies and crimes, lamenting their hardness and unbelief, and announcing to them the fearful doom which now awaited them, their city, and their state. His disciples, who had been listening to these remarks, were slow to take in the idea of such desolation, and seemed to doubt of its possibility, except in connection with the end of the world itself. Hence, as he came out of the temple, they began to call his attention to the massive strength and glory of that structure, exclaiming about its great stones, its Cyclopean masonry, and its richness in other respects, as if questioning whether such a magnificent piece of work could ever be destroyed, till earth and seas be shaken out of their places. To this he made answer, pointing to these very walls and saying, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." He then passed over Kedron, and seated himself on the Mount of Olives, looking down upon the city and temple as if musing on the fearful ruin which was presently to fall on both. The anxious curiosity of the disciples soon led some of them to come and ask him privately to explain when these things should be, and what would be the sign of his coming and of the end of the world

And in response to this request, this wonderful prophetic discourse was given.

It is therefore quite manifest, that the most direct application of this prophecy, at least in its first parts, is to the fall of the Jewish metropolis, economy, and state. The interval between the delivery of these predictions and that event embraced about forty years; and in those years we also find a striking fulfilment of what is contained in the prophecy.

Christ commenced his answer to the inquiry of his disciples by cautioning them against being deceived, as impostors would come, assuming the name and office of the Messiah, and seeking to avail themselves of the common hopes and expectations for the accomplishment of their own evil ends. Accordingly we read of Simon Magus, who so bewitched the people of Samaria, that they looked upon him as the great power of God, Acts 8 : 9, 10; also of Dositheus, the Samaritan, who made similar pretensions; also of Theudas, who persuaded multitudes to follow him with their best effects, promising to divide the waters of Jordan for them as they were divided in the days of Joshua; and of others of like character, starting up in such numbers, that the historian says there was scarcely a day that did not witness the arrest or execution of one or another of this class.

Wars and rumors of wars, the rising of nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, were next spoken of; which also occurred in those eventful forty years, not only in Palestine, but

wherever the Jews were found. Bloody dissensions, insurrections, and mutual slaughter and fightings, beside the fears and alarms begotten from Rome, were the order of the day. Tetrarchy rose against tetrarchy, nationality against nationality in the same localities, and party against party, till, as Josephus expresses it, every city was divided into two armies, each bent upon the destruction of the other, polluting the whole land with incessant butchery and massacres, in which thousands upon thousands perished.

"Famines" were also among the things foretold, and their concomitant "pestilences," all of which were present in those years. Agabus, in Acts, speaks of one; Suetonius tells of others; and Josephus writes the sorrowful story of starvation in Jerusalem because of the scarcity of food.

So too with regard to "earthquakes in divers places." Not less than a dozen are named by the historians of those times, occurring at various points throughout the Roman Empire where the Jews were most numerous, with such shakings in Palestine that Josephus says it was manifest the constitution of the universe was confounded, and any one could easily see that no common calamity was portended.

So too with regard to "fearful sights and great signs from heaven." The Jewish Josephus and the Roman Tacitus both tell of them. A meteoric brightness, or comet, in the shape of a sword, hung over the city of Jerusalem for a whole year. While the people were gathered together at the celebra-

tion of the feast of unleavened bread, a great light blazed around the altar, and the temple, for half an hour. The massive eastern gate, which twenty men could scarcely shut, though fastened with strong bolts and bars, was seen to open of its own accord. As the sun was setting, chariots and armies, fighting, and besieging cities, appeared in the clouds over the whole country. And at the feast of Pentecost, as the priests were going into the inner temple at night to perform the wonted service, they heard a motion and noise, and then the voice as of a great multitude saying, "*Let us depart hence!*"

And as to the tribulation without a parallel, that also came. Josephus describes it and says, "It appears to me, that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were." Army after army came; city after city was captured, sacked, and destroyed; district after district was overrun and plundered; thousands upon thousands of men, women, and children fell by the sword, perished by exposure, fright, and famine, or were transported and sold as slaves; Jerusalem was besieged, taken, destroyed, and turned into a pile of ruins; making altogether one of the darkest chapters in all the history of man.

But, in wrath, God still remembers mercy. There were some, in among those perverse people, who were not to share the same fate with the rest. Though made to suffer in a measure, provision

was made for their deliverance and safety. They believed in Christ, and hoped through him; and they were not left to perish with the hypocrites and unbelievers. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and how to deliver them in the day of trouble. And it was with special reference to their safety and preservation that this marvellous prophetic discourse was given. By it they were forewarned of what was to come, forearmed against the approaching dangers, and put in the way of salvation from the general wreck.

The Saviour referred to some "abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," on the appearance of which he directed all his followers to flee to the mountains, and get clean out of the country, or, if out, to stay out. Exactly what that "abomination of desolation" was, we cannot now precisely tell. It was not the profanation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes; for that came nearly two hundred years too soon for this occasion. Nor is it the future desecration by the final Antichrist; for that comes in the last period of this world, and hence thousands of years too late. Neither was it the setting up of the Roman standards in the temple, and the offering of sacrifice to them there, under Titus; for that also was too late to serve as a signal for flight and safety from the calamities amid which Jerusalem fell. Neither was it any special profanation of the temple during the siege of Jerusalem; for that could have been no sign to those Christians in other places, and would also have been too late to be of avail. There

is difficulty also in supposing it to be the simple planting of the standards of Rome in Palestine; for those standards had been planted there long before this, whilst the Roman eagle appeared on nearly every coin in the realm. Still, as Luke's version of the matter connects the sign for the directed flight with the compassing about of Jerusalem with armies, and as it necessarily was a thing conspicuous enough for all on the watch for it to see and identify it, we must locate it, in good part at least, with the planting of the standards of the invading Roman army on the sacred territory; not necessarily *in the temple*, but (εν τοπῳ αγιῳ) *on holy ground* in general. These standards being objects of idolatrous worship, were "abomination;" and as representatives of the destroying power thus come into the precincts of God's temple, they were agents and heralds of desolation and ruin. They stood on holy ground when Cestius made the first attack on Jerusalem; and the sudden withdrawal of his forces, together with the utter rout to which his unexplained retreat subjected him, also furnished just such a convenient opportunity for the directed flight, as did not again occur in the whole course of those dreadful and desolating times. Josephus tells us, as a matter of history, that at this particular time, many of the noble Jews departed out of the city, as out of a sinking ship. So also the Christian historians, Eusebius and Epiphanius, tell us, that at this juncture all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem, and removed to Pella, and

other places beyond Jordan, and so escaped the general shipwreck of their country. Nor do we read of any Christians perishing in that fearful catastrophe.

To make this escape, however, great promptness and precipitancy were required the moment the indication for the directed flight was given. Those in the city were at once to pass out of it, and those in the country were instantaneously to drop everything and flee into the mountains. Any one observing the sign from the housetop, was not to think of going down into his house to take anything out of it. There was no packing up to be done. Every one was to move at once, just as he was, not waiting to arrange for anything. The man in the field was not allowed even to go home first, but instantaneously to fly for his life. Of course, with these specific and urgent directions before them, everything was kept in the utmost possible readiness, as the time approached. Signals were doubtless arranged to convey the intelligence from one to another, meeting-places were appointed, and full understandings between the various members of each family, congregation, and neighborhood kept up; so that if the notifications came to them separately, each one would know where to find the other, and at what points they would join each other again. Nor can we be at a loss to imagine something of the scene that was presented in the Christian part of the community of Palestine, as the army of Cestius confronted Jerusalem, and the gleam of the Roman

eagles from Mount Scopus announced that the moment for this flight had come!

Nor can the thoughtful reader but wonder at the infinite compassion and tenderness of our Saviour for his people under the peculiar trials of this sudden and hurried flight. He thinks of winter and stormy weather, and how these fugitives would suffer if compelled to make this flight at such a time, and bids them pray that the necessity might not fall in so unfavorable a period. He thinks of the restrictions of the Jewish Sabbath, when the gates of the cities were closed, all journey intercepted, and all sympathy for those not conforming to the custom entirely withdrawn, and how they would be disadvantaged and hindered if compelled to fly on that day; and so directs them to pray that no such necessity might arise. He thinks of burdened and expectant mothers and little children, and laments the sorrows and trials which this necessary flight would be to them. And every species of exposure, peril, and disadvantage he takes into consideration, and provides against with the utmost tenderness. Indeed, it is not possible for us half to understand the depths of our Lord's compassion for them that trust in him. It might seem foolish, indeed, to think of influencing the march of the Roman armies, or the decisions of the Roman Senate, or the orders of Roman generals for the delivery of battle, by the prayers of a few Christians, in the obscurity of their homes and little assemblies. Yet so he directed; and, whatever philosophers and skeptics

may say of it, the disciples did as they were commanded, and the result was as they prayed!

And a like mercifulness was shown in the prevention of this unexampled tribulation from running its full course. Had no hand come in to modify the judgment itself, no flesh could have been saved—the whole Jewish race must have speedily perished. But for the elect's sake those days were shortened, and the process of utter extermination stayed. There was still a remnant of true believers, though compelled to fly for their lives, and for them there was some diminution of the violence of the blow. In them the ancient people of God was still perpetuated, and not cast away, Rom. 11 : 1, 2; and on their account God softened the desolating calamities which otherwise would have made a complete end of all. He was not yet done with the Jews as a people. In the subsequent ages, important witnesses to his truth were to be gathered from among that rebellious house; and far down in the evening of time, there yet remained a mission for them to fill. An election for these gracious ends was therefore made, and for this elect's sake also some restraint and shortening of the fearful destruction was interposed. And thus, on account of those who already were believers, and of those who should afterwards become believers, God mercifully shortened those awful days, that there might still a few survive to say, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been

like unto Gomorrah." Is. 1 : 9. Indeed, God is far more merciful than we know or suspect.

But this prophecy was by no means exhausted by what happened to Jerusalem. Though it begins there, it does not stop there. The questions to which it was an answer connected those scenes and events with the end of the world. Nor was this altogether an error. Those scenes and events were really the beginning and earnest of the more general judgment yet to come. The plain terms of the prophecy itself, whatever may be said of the earlier portions, also show that we are here on other ground than merely that of the signs and attendants of the end of the old Jewish city and state.

It is a common proverb, that history continually repeats itself. One set of scenes and occurrences in the Divine administrations, is ever the foreshadow of others of a corresponding character. To this idea much of the sacred prophecies is framed. There is a perspective in it which takes into the same view both near and remote events of like character and significance. Hence we often find germinant and typical fulfilments anterior to the final and complete fulfilment. In other words, the element of *time*, and the distribution of events with regard to time, are not noted in sacred predictions, as we note them in history. Before the first advent of Christ, it could not be ascertained that he was to come twice. The same predictions took in both his first and second ad-

vents without note as to what belonged to the first only, or what belongs to the second. The reason is, that the two advents belong together as parts of one and the same piece, the last being the completion of the first, and the first the beginning of the last. And it is the same with the prophecy now before us. It plainly refers to the ending of the Jewish economy and state, and some elements of it cannot be interpreted of anything else; but it just as plainly takes in the ending of the present dispensation also, and contains language and particulars which must needs be so construed. Yet, with all the study and ingenuity brought to bear, no one can tell with certainty where the point of transition is, from what is past to what is future. There is no one single point of such transition from earlier to later facts, or from the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the world. The leading statements throughout apply more or less to both, as parts of one and the same whole, without special distinction as to time; although the first part settles more emphatically on the earlier facts, and the final portions more exclusively on the latter. In other words, the Saviour meant the discourse as a prophecy of the preliminary signs and attendants of the fall of the Jewish economy and state, and at the same time of the preliminary signs and attendants of his own second coming and the end of this world. For those who lived before the fall of Jerusalem, it was meant to apply to what was immediately before them, without distinct indication whether it was to usher in the general judg-

ment and end of all things, or not; and for those who have since lived, and especially for us, it was meant to set forth the signs and attendants of the end of this world, illustrated and certified by what has already been fulfilled, so that we need only to look back upon what then occurred to see what is to come again.

Were the last days of Jerusalem calamitous days—times of great tribulation—times of wickedness, falsehood, dissension, violence, war, and general disturbance? So the Scriptures tell us it will be in the ending period of this present world. Scoffers will come, walking after their own lusts; filthy dreamers will come, foaming out their own shame; and mere brute beasts of men will come, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness; and these will heap up oppressions, blasphemies, corruptions, and abominations, and defile and pervert the sentiment and the peace of the Church and the world, till judgment strikes, and sweeps them to their deserved perdition.

Did Jerusalem's day of judgment come on in a seemingly natural course of things? So also will it be with the coming of the great day. It will have much less of the immediately supernatural to herald it than many are counting. It is when men are saying, Peace and safety, that the mighty destruction will break in. Things will move on much in their ordinary way. The times will gradually alter from what they once were, but it will be taken as the result of progress and enlarged ideas—the herald of a better order. The common

works of men will be as usual, only that the world will move faster. Expeditions will be planned, armies mustered, contests waged, battles fought, sieges pressed and endured, tyrannies established, and human passions set in action, all with the usual motives, only the more intensified. Some startling portents shall appear, noted and heeded by some, but by the most disregarded, or explained away as freaks of nature, signifying nothing. The intimations are that scarcely any will at all suspect what is at hand, or whither things are drifting, till the last fires burst forth, and all is over.

Were those last days of the old economy, days of abounding falsehood and deception, when men were lured with false lights, encouraged with false hopes, and betrayed by pseudo-saviours and lying prophets? The same is to occur again. The plain word is, "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Satan will get possession of men, and hallucinate them with strange beliefs that they are sent of God, and impersonations of his power and wisdom, for the direction and salvation of mankind. I have had two such come to me, within the past few years, the one claiming that he was the great prophet Elijah; and the other, that he was the prince of God and the future King of Israel; who left me the benefit of their amiable curses, when I refused to credit their blasphemous pretensions, or to help them in their miserable schemes. Plenty of new lights, with their Lo!

here is Christ, and Lo, there, are coming up every day, leaping about over Christendom like the frogs of Egypt, each with his party of wondering admirers, and all in zealous activity, spoiling the truth of God, and deluding and ruining the souls of men. And so it will go on, the success and fame of one emboldening and paving the way for another, till the great body of Christendom shall be loosed from its moorings, betrayed into the devil's hands, and ripened for the calamities of the judgment, which shall come upon it as a snare upon an unsuspecting animal.

The zealots in the days of Jerusalem's trouble would by no means believe what was before them, or what wickednesses they were enacting in the name of truth. To them the thought that God was about to surrender them to destruction, was the worst of treason. How could it be! Were they not the seed of faithful Abraham, the heirs to the covenants and promises! Were not all the prophets of their blood! Were not their calling and all their distinctive laws from heaven! Were not their very lands apportioned to them by lines drawn by Jehovah! Was not Jerusalem God's own chosen dwelling-place, and its temple the only one on earth devoted to his Name! And how could the Almighty so contradict himself, and dishonor his own works and words, as to give them up a prey to the destroyer! Thus they encouraged and persuaded themselves by the most sacred of appeals, and huddled by thousands into the temple, confident in their own piety, and expect-

ing certain deliverance and victory, up to the last instant, when the Romans broke in upon them, and all their hopes went out in blood and darkness!

And so it will be again. The drapery of the scene will be different, but the substance of it will be the same. And we can already trace it. Some there be who discern the signs of the times, and are awake and watching day and night. God's eye also is on them, and not one of them shall perish. But the most of our modern Christians will not allow it possible that the day of judgment can be at hand. The world must be converted first. They will not so dishonor Christ and his institutes as to admit the nearness of the end, while yet so much remains to be achieved. They are infinitely indignant, and all their feelings are inflamed with holy resentment, at thought of the Gospel being a failure, which they say it must needs be if Christ were soon to come. And when we speak of the evident marks of the nearing of the great day of God Almighty, they sneer at us as Adventists, and post us as fanatics, and have a hundred conclusive reasons why we should not be listened to, even though we have for witness the plain and explicit words of Christ and his apostles. They say we quench the spirit of missions and Christian enterprise; that we depreciate Christianity's power; that we dishonor the Holy Ghost and the virtue of God's truth; that we undermine the faith, betray the Christian cause, dampen people's enjoyment of their religion, cut off all hope

from the efforts of men and the progress of things, and play the part of croakers, religious cowards, and theological imbeciles, too insipid and diseased to be considered right Christians! Their idea is that men of genuine metal must stand fast in the hope of better times, looking and working in Church and State for a grand triumph and glorious millennium in this world yet before the day of judgment. The only trouble they see is, that the old ways of doing things are superannuated and effete. What they call for is simply a new departure. Only let the old churchism be abandoned! Let the laymen have a chance! Let the women preach! Open prayer-meetings in the theatres! Give the helm to men of "snap" in place of consecrated drones! Cast off creeds, and isms, and sacraments! Let there be liberty, equality, fraternity, and all join shoulder to shoulder for one grand conflict with the aliens, shouting the watchwords "God and Victory," deaf to everything beside! And they are sure the world, from one end to the other, shall soon ring out the jubilee of Gospel triumph and millennial glory! Such is the spirit and such the popular belief and inculcation of those who call themselves advanced Christians. And so it will continue, the spirit of the Jewish zealots re-enacting itself in the great city of Christendom, the blasphemous conceit and apostasy increasing every day, till the consummation comes, and blots the base fraud from the face of the earth.

But, although such is the prospect before us; and although it would seem as if we had verily

fallen on the times foretold as those in which the great day of judgment is to come: we are not therefore left without hope, or without consolation. There was an elect who escaped the destruction when Jerusalem fell. They felt the tremor which shook the land, but, heeding the words and forewarnings of their Lord, they were safely out of reach when the great crash came. They were told to watch, and wait, and endure, and pray, and not suffer themselves to be turned aside for anything however specious, till God should give the signal, and thus transport them beyond the scene of the dread disaster; and they obeyed, and they were saved. And so there will be an elect of God and witnesses for God, and children of his who sigh and who cry for the abominations that are done, and waiting and watching ones, who will not be overlooked or forgotten of Heaven, however despised and contemned on earth, as the last dread catastrophe draws on. Jesus knows them, and how they cry day and night unto him, and will see that they are not left to perish with the wicked world. They have no lights, no oracles, no guides, but those accessible to all; but they see, and hear, and read them differently. They take their faith from the books, in place of reading their own thoughts and imaginings into those books. They take God at his word, and have no further questionings or hopes. They do not pretend to know everything, but are satisfied that God does, and needs no helping out with man's reasonings or fancies. They are not afraid

to read what is "spoken of by Daniel the prophet," and, reading, to believe that he means what he says. They are content to accept the Divine prophecies as something more than a sternlight, to be seen only when the vessel has gone by; and on those prophecies they are willing to venture their faith and hope respecting all that is to come. They sit loosely in their present habitations, free as possible from all earthly entanglements, that they may be in momentary readiness to answer the signals of their Lord, sure that there is no remedy for this world against the destruction that has been decreed concerning it and all the works that are in it. Other Christs may present themselves, with their new Gospels, their fresh oracles, their better hopes, their mighty demonstrations, their signs, their wonders, their convincing proofs, and what may perfectly satisfy the shallow credulity of those who know better than God and his Christ; but, like Lebanon against the sea, these stand fast on the old foundations, never once moved or shaken by all the turbulence of the dashing waves, calmly waiting till God himself shall signal to them from the skies, and say: "Come up hither!" And when the wicked perish, they shall see it; see it from the solid fastnesses of their everlasting security with that Jesus whose glorious coming they so anxiously await.

And our privilege it is, my brethren and friends, to be among them. To this end has Christ spoken to us, and sent his messengers to call, instruct, and warn us. To this end have we his word in

our houses and in our hands, and the gates of his sanctuary and sacraments open before us, and the signs and portents thickening around us every day, and the Holy Ghost brooding about us and knocking at the doors of our hearts, and the mighty administrations of God moving and shaking the world on all sides, and the voice from heaven ringing ever louder in our ears: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be!" And all that is necessary for us in the case is, to hear and heed, believe and live.

And now again, the Gospel trump is blown:—
From year to year it swells with louder tone;
From year to year the signs of wrath
Are gathering round the Judge's path;
Strange words fulfilled, and mighty works achieved,
And truth in all the world both hated and believed.

But what are Heaven's alarms to hearts that cower
In wilful slumber, deepening every hour,—
That draw their curtains closer round
The nearer swells the trumpet's sound?
Lord, ere our trembling lamps sink down and die,
Touch us with chastening hand, and make us feel Thee nigh!

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matt. 25 : 31–46. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.

SOME take this solemn description as parallel in import with the vision of the great white throne, and the judgment of the dead, described in Revelation 20 : 11–15. Such an interpretation, however, is very

difficult to maintain. It is "*the dead*," who are the subjects of that judgment; but here not a word is said about the dead, nor about resurrection, nor about individuals, except as connected together in tribes and nationalities. The phrase *πάντα τα ἔθνη—all the nations*—certainly is nowhere else used in the Scriptures to denote the dead. More than one hundred and fifty times is this word (*ἔθνος*) employed in the New Testament, and never once of any but some race, people, community, or nation, living upon the earth, and those particularly which were so long outside of God's special economy of grace. It is a limited word. Even in its widest form, and with the most comprehensive adjective added, it is still a limited expression, which, at most, reaches no further than the totality of the heathen as distinguished from the Jews, and that totality only as living, without regard to the dead. And though the scene here depicted is unmistakably a final judgment scene, it is hardly possible to do justice to the language or the facts, by extending it beyond living nations, as such, or by attempting to explain it with reference to one grand general judgment of all men of all classes, both living and dead.

By referring to those closing chapters of the Revelation, which describe affairs on the other side of the great judgment, we find "nations" referred to as still existing, walking in the light of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the subjects of blessed healing. Likewise, Moses, in Deuteronomy 32: 43, referring to scenes beyond the judg-

ment, touching the final re-establishment of Israel, speaks of contemporaneous "nations" participating in that ultimate joy and blessedness. As a distinguished modern German commentator expresses it, it seems that when the great consummation is complete, and the new heavens and earth appear, "the circle of the Theocracy is surrounded by the circle of holy humanity." This would necessarily imply a judgment of nations, as nations, and the judicial award of a place to some nations in the kingdom and blessedness of the regenerated world. And such a judgment of nations being necessarily implied in the result, we would expect to find some account of it in the many extended predictions respecting the administrations of the great day. Such an account we also have in the Gospel for this morning, if at all literally to be taken. The scene depicted certainly differs in important respects from the ordinary pictures of the coming of Christ in relation to individuals. It plainly contemplates the brethren of Christ, as already present with him at the time—"these my brethren"—and distinguishes them from the particular subjects of this particular adjudication. The basis of the awards is also readily comprehensible on the idea that it is a dealing with nations, but singularly indirect and peculiar if to be understood of the relation of individuals to God, and their personal salvation.

Besides, as the question is put by Dr. Stier, "could Christ have spoken of his coming three times in succession, and that so differently in each

instance, if an actually different fulfilment did not correspond to his word:" One coming with power and great glory is described in chapter 24 : 27–51. This is for the taking or gathering to himself in the sky, of all his elect and waiting people. It is further described in Luke 17 : 34–37, and explained by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13–18. "Then" (τότε)—*after that*—there is another coming, described in chapter 25 : 1–13, in which Christ appears as the Bridegroom, who, having obtained his Bride, is about to celebrate the great marriage supper, and they that are ready go in with him to the marriage. And then, *later still*, and in fuller revelation to the world, comes the particular scene of the text, introduced with the ordinary Greek particles (ὅταν, δε, τότε,) indicative of distinction from what had preceded, and marked in all its terms and features as a different thing from what had been already described.

We may therefore be nearest the truth, if we take it as the New Testament picture of the same things referred to in Jeremiah 25 : 15–33. That certainly describes a universal judgment of nations, as nations, and can only receive complete fulfilment at the great day. Exactly to such a session on the throne of his glory answer the words of the old prophet: "The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord

hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword. Evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground." Compare, also, Revelation 19:11–21.

But without attempting to press a point which involves much else to be explained, and remembering that the leading ideas are much the same and closely related in all the particular administrations of the great day, we may profitably treat the subject of this morning's Lesson in a more general way.

I. The text is sufficiently suggestive of the fact, which we need to take most solemnly to heart, that the whole race of man will, some day, and in some way be brought into conscious contact with Jesus as the Judge of quick and dead. Christ is "the King." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" "and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." John 5:22, 27. Yea, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2 : 9–11. Nor is there any principality, power, might, dominion, or name that is named, in this world or that which is to come, which has not been put under his feet, and made subject to his jurisdiction. And this sublime kinghood will not forever remain that hidden thing that it is now. There is to come a visible revelation and assertion of it. He who was put out of this world so ignominiously, and went up into heaven so quietly, will presently come in glory. So all the Scriptures teach; so all the creeds confess; so all true Christians believe. Everything prophesies of that grand apocalypse. It has been long delayed. Some have grown tired waiting for it. But God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. The day is approaching. The word is spoken, and it must be fulfilled: "I will come again." And when he comes, it will be with a magnificence such as earth has never witnessed.

He will come "in his glory,"—that glory which he had with the Father before the world was,—that honor and glory which the Father hath given him,—that glory in which he was seen on the mount of transfiguration, when his face shone as the sun, and his very garments glistened with the radiancy of incomparable brightness.

A throne shall bear him,—a white throne of infinite purity,—a great throne of almighty power,—a throne of glory. On it he sits, by undisputed right, with the fulness of all authority, in the

composure of completed triumph. Daniel beheld him on that seat, and found the vision more than flesh and blood could well bear. Isaiah saw him on that throne, high and lifted up, and the Seraphim crying Holy, Holy, Holy, till the posts of the everlasting doors moved, and the prophet's heart sunk within him.

Angels will accompany him,—those primal sons of creative power, born amid the early beams of eternity, and clothed with might, intelligence, and ardor for their God,—those morning stars who chanted the birth-hymn of visible nature, sung over the manger, ministered in the garden, watched by the tomb, numberless as the stars, moving as the lightning, and filling the universe with their blessed ministries,—all these shall make up the grand celestial cavalcade. Elsewhere we read of myriads of saints, of heavenly armies on white horses, of a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and varied insignia of majesty, to fill out the idea of the "power and great glory" in which the King and Judge shall come again to the world that once crucified him.

And every one that has ever lived must then confront him. "Before him shall be gathered all nations." "They that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." John beheld, "and the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them;" and he "saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." With uplifted hands he already anticipates the whole

scene, and cries, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." Some may call on the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, to hide them from his face; but it will not avail.

Men and nations are, indeed, before him all the time. His eye sees them now just as nearly and as clearly as he will look upon them then. He is as really dealing with every one at this present, clothed in just as great a majesty as he then will be. But people do not realize it. Some have a little consciousness of the fact. Enoch walked with him; Moses endured as seeing him; David set the Lord always before his eyes; Paul felt him standing by in the midst of the darkness and the storms; Stephen beheld him as he knelt for his last prayer; John saw him from among the black rocks of Patmos; and the sincere worshipper has some impressions of his august presence in the holy ordinances of his house. But very few are conscious how he compasses us about behind and before, or realize anything of the experience attendant upon the uncovering of his majesty, when he shall come to judge the earth, and the people with his truth. The atheist who will not know of him, the idolater who thinks him a stock or stone, or only some distant orb or shadow of the sky, the apostate who has deserted him, the worldling who barters his word and grace for pelf and pleasure, and all who come and go regardless of his Gospel or his law, will then feel his awful presence more

than Isaiah when he fell down crying "Woe me! I am undone! for mine eyes have seen the King!" Even the deadest soul then shall feel his scorching glance more keenly than the hand can feel the burning flame. Nor will the vestments of priests, the robes of kings, the wealth of the rich, the dignities of the great, the power of the mighty, or all the courage and confidence of the brave, any more than the rags of the beggar or the helplessness of the weak, be any stay, shelter or support against the awfulness of the vision which shall burst on men when face to face they meet their Almighty Judge!

Dies ira, dies illa
Solvet sæclum in favillâ!

II. Another important and most solemn truth suggested by the text is, that Christ as our Judge will then separate mankind into two distinct portions. Now the wheat and the tares grow together. There is a difference between them, even at present, which the skilled eye can detect in most instances. The sheep are sheep, and the goats, goats, and the one class is not confounded with the other; but, as yet, they run together, and there is no severance of them into separate fields or pastures. It will not always be so. Infidels and Christians will one day cease to live under the same roof, or believers and unbelievers to be unequally yoked together, or the children of the devil and the children of God to be intermingled in the same families, firms, and societies. When men come to ap-

pear before their Judge, the record is, "He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." That word which made the stars, and set the heavenly constellations in the infinitude of space,—that made the earth, and clothed it with its exhaustless beauty,—shall cleave like a sword through the entire mass of humanity, and split it clean in twain. Thenceforward there shall be but two great groups of men, quite separated from each other, both in place and estate.

It is a wide separation; for "He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." The left and right hands of a court, or judge, anciently signified much. The right hand is the place and sign of acceptance, acquittal, approval, and exalted honor. Hence our Lord and Saviour now "sitteth on *the right hand* of God the Father Almighty." The left hand is the place and sign of condemnation, disfavor, rejection, and degradation. And the difference between the two constitutes "a great gulf," wide-yawning and impassable.

It includes also the element of nearness or remoteness from God, his favor and fellowship. To those marshalled into the sunny exaltation of the Judge's right hand, the word of the King shall be, "Come!" It is the old, sweet, familiar word of Gospel love and condescension, rung out in chimes, and sermons, and songs, and merciful invitations, Sunday after Sunday, year by year, for all these centuries of grace. It is the word of heavenward,

homeward, Godward motion, that tells of an ever lasting

> Nearer, my God, to Thee,
> Nearer to Thee!

But, for those on the left hand, the word is just the opposite. It strikes on the ear like the harsh grating of the opening of the gates of hell. It breaks from the lips of the Judge like the sharp thunder from a tempest-clouded sky;—a dark, hope-quenching, desolating, terrible word,—"Depart." Oh, the bereavement, the exile, the dreadful expatriation, that lies in those little syllables! Well has it been called "an inexhaustible centrifugal impulse, ever retreating from the fountain of all light, and life, and joy, each step in the terrible descent aggravating the woe and increasing the misery, and no step ever touching the bottom of that unsounded sea of sorrow!"

And intenser and more fearful still is that awful severance, in that it involves the difference between God's blessing and a condition of accursedness. On the one side we have the Blessed of the Father. Men may have hated and reviled them; Popes may have anathematized them; councils may have condemned them; courts may have passed sentence upon them; Jews may have put them out of the synagogue; nations may have hunted them down as enemies of the public peace; the sword of the executioner may have cut off their heads; the flames of the stake may have consumed their bodies; the dungeons of power may

have shut them in from all further sight of the light of earthly day; parents may have disowned them; homes rejected them; communities banished them; and the people of this world cursed them. Still, Jesus pronounces upon them the Blessed of his Father. But on the left hand are the "cursed;" not the cursed of the Father. Our blessings come of God, our ills come of ourselves and our own sins. A great living preacher says: "In life's sunny places, I see my Father; in life's dark and dreary places, I see my sin. Ever as I gaze on storm, earthquake, tribulation, bereavements, losses, and crosses, I see the evidence of what sin has done; but ever as I gaze on what is beautiful, and bright, and happy, and holy, I see pervading all, giving tone, coloring, and shape to all, the loving kindness and grace of our Father. The curse is from sin." But the misfortune is none the less because sin inflicts its own curse. The wicked shall find no palliation of their misery from the consideration that they have been the factors of their own damnation. Nor will it matter how great, or renowned, or honored, or learned, or eloquent, or ingenious, or potent with pen, or tongue, or sword, or pencil, they may have been; what monuments have been reared to their memory; what tablets mark their graves; what works or inventions remain to tell of them; or what jealous guardianship families, societies, nations, or the whole world may exercise for the preservation of their honor or their names. Having failed in the great and vital matters of a right relation to

God and his Gospel, the curse is on them, and miserable convicts they are, and will remain, and be the abhorred of the holy for all the eternal years! It makes me shudder to speak it: but here are the words from the lips of the Almighty Judge himself, and who can alter them?

And yet darker, wider, mightier is this awful separation in the divergent destinies which it introduces. On the one side is an inheritance,—a portion in preparation since the world began,—a possession to which all the administrations of God, angels and holy men, in all these centuries of time, have made their contributions,—a realm of divine blessedness,—a kingdom which knows no evil,—a life which knows no death,—a habitable world to come, whose soil is ever fresh with flowers, whose firmament ever glows with stars that make up the Scriptures of the sky, all whose sounds are harmony, all whose sights are beauty, and graced with a golden metropolis whose maker and builder is God. On the other side gapes a lake of unquenchable fire, black with the smoke of ages, never, indeed, meant or made for men, but the portion of all those who hold with those for whom it was made. Punishments are there, and tears that ever fall, and flames that ever burn, and miseries that never exhaust. Exactly what it is I cannot tell, and never wish to ascertain. I can only rehearse the dreadful imagery of God's word upon the subject. Concerning the devil, the final record is, he "was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," into which the beast and the false prophet had

sunk before, and where he and they "shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." And here the word of final sentence delivers over the unsaved "into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," sending them "away into everlasting punishment." Be the meaning what it may, a vast and mighty difference of eternal destiny is indicated. Yet so shall men be separated when the great judgment comes.

III. It only remains, then, to remark the law of this apportionment. It is not a matter of caprice, or mere arbitrary power. It is a thing of principle, a matter of right and justice to all concerned. There is a reason given for the favors shown the one class, and for the dreadful repulse administered to the other. That reason, as here stated, is, kindnesses or unkindnesses shown to Christ, in the treatment of those whom he calls his brethren. No church-persecuting nation shall survive the day of judgment. Whether professedly Christian, or outside the pale of Christendom, it must perish, as the kingdom and dominion of the Beast and the false Prophet, who "were both cast alive into a lake of fire." All governments, uncharitable toward Christ's brethren, shall be utterly destroyed. Even ignorance will not relieve the matter. Though they may have it to say, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" the answer still shall be, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"—"Inasmuch as ye

did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

A nation, as such, has no soul. It can be judged on no principle but that of works. It can be punished only in the sphere of the outward life. And so the description is here. It is different with individual persons. There the judgment is according to the inward, and the punishment is on both soul and body. Faith is there the great principle on which we stand or fall. As we believe so we receive. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Mark 16 : 16. But where faith is, there the judgment of the individual is already so far passed, that he is absolved, justified, approved, and cannot any more come into condemnation. But even there *works* come into the account, both as the evidences of faith, and as the basis of rewards. Where no charity is,—no love to the brethren of Jesus,—no manifestation of the Christ-spirit towards Christ's suffering members,—there faith is wanting, and there the judgment must be unto condemnation and perdition; and where charity is, evincing the presence and power of faith in the soul, there the reward shall be in proportion as the works have been.

Whether, therefore, we view this scene as pertaining to nations or to individuals, in either case, the importance of practical benevolence appears. Without it, the curse abides, and must go into effect. Even faith, if it hath not works, is dead, and cannot perform the offices of faith.

God is love, and he that loveth not, knoweth not God, and must depart from him. No one can go to heaven hating, carping at, and persecuting Christ's people, or even "the least" among them. He who will not for Christ's sake feel kindly and deal mercifully toward even the weakest and least lovely of Christ's flock, is not prepared for the day of judgment, and can by no possibility pass it in safety. Let the case be what it may, if people will not give and forgive, bear and forbear, as an essential part of their religion, they have not yet grace enough in them to be God's children, and they must consent to take their portion with "the devil and his angels." There is no other alternative. Without the spirit of charity we cannot be like God; and without being like God we cannot rise to communion with him. Without charity we lack the vital essence of faith; and where faith is not, there is no salvation. Without charity we are unlike Christ: and without resemblance to him we are none of his. How can we be Christians, without love to Christ? How can we expect salvation, while we despise or neglect him? How dwelleth the love of God in us, if we would not be willing to do anything and everything for Jesus that can possibly come within our power? But he identifies himself with all the children of God; he calls them his brethren; he takes to heart their experiences as his own; he reckons what is done to them as done to him; and if they cannot command and enlist our interest and charity on his account, it is because our interest in him is not

yet of an effective and saving sort. For the principle in the great and irrevocable decision is: "Depart from me, ye cursed;" ye had no sympathy or charity for the weak, and small, and needy among my people; and not having it for them, ye had it not for me!

Friends and brethren, it is a strange account which we are called to contemplate this day,—the account of our own hereafter. A few weeks ago our community had before it the singular case of one of our distinguished citizens made to read his own obituary! But here we have, in all the minuteness of historic detail, the final scenes and experiences of every one of us! The mightiest and most decisive conclusion of our being is here depicted to us, as if already passing or passed into immutable fact. Here we have, not only our earthly obituaries, but our eternal fate as well. Strange attitude in which to be placed, that we should be remarking upon the narrative of our own end and everlasting future! But stranger still, that we should be contemplating it with so little emotion, and such distant concern! How is it, that men can walk, as it were, among their own graves, read their own epitaphs, sit as spectators of the momentous assize which settles beyond recall or change the whole character of their eternity, and live in the admitted certainty of it all, without a stir among their feelings, with scarce a ripple of seriousness in their thoughts, and as composed and indifferent respecting its approach as if it related to beings of other worlds, with which

we have not the least to do! O, to think, that thus shall each of us stand, bare to Jehovah's eye and to assembled heaven, all that we now hide from our nearest friends and very selves made visible to the universe, no one shred left to shelter our secret corruptions, every fold of hypocrisy untwisted, every artifice of self-deceit exposed;—to think, how certain all this is, how it is pictured to us on every page of the Book of God, how it is thundered in our ears by what has happened in the past, and how it is re-echoed in our deepest souls by conscience and reason;—and yet, that we should live as we do, scarce alive to any real claims of duty to God beyond a few formalities of outward worship, or of duty to ourselves except the promptings of worldly calculation, or of duty to one another apart from selfish likes, caprices, relationships, or party interests,—mere indolent expectants of imaginary mercies, of which we know neither the ground nor the condition! How is this? O God! how is this? What does it mean?

King of Majesty tremendous,
Who didst free salvation send us,
Fount of pity, O befriend us!

With Thy favored sheep, O place us!
Nor amid the goats abase us!
To thine own right hand upraise us!

To the Rest Thou dost prepare us,
On thy Cross, O Christ, upbear us!
Spare, O God, in mercy spare us!

THANKSGIVING DAY.*

Rev. 21 : 1–4. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

WE come, this morning, to celebrate our annual thanksgiving to Almighty God for his goodness and mercies to us during the year. It is an occasion on which our rulers and our people are saying to each other, "Come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation." The words read may seem remote from such an occasion, but a closer consideration may find in them a relation to the service for which we have convened, bringing them sufficiently near to be handled with profit in such a connection.

It is quite certain that some of our holiest celebrations on earth have drawn their best aids from corresponding celebrations in heaven. How sub-

* Somewhat after a sermon in the German by Karl Gerok.

limely the worshipping soul soars away to the feet of Deity in that grand old morning hymn, the *Gloria in excelsis!* Yet it was first sung, in its grandest part, by the angels, and from their lips the Church has transferred it to her own. How are our hearts uplifted for that holiest of eucharistic feasts, by the grand Communion Canticle: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" Yet these words, by which we join "with angels and archangels, and with the whole company of heaven," to "laud and magnify" Jehovah's name, have been borrowed from the six-winged Seraphims whom Isaiah heard trilling their *Trisagion* in the celestial temple till the door-posts moved. And why should not these visions of the final consummation, and of the rejoicings which then shall thrill the ransomed universe, serve to give us thought-food and inspiration for our earthly celebration of the Divine bounties which the past year of time has vouchsafed?

Is there not also another and grander year than those which we thus chronicle,—a year of which the years of our calendars are but the hours? Has it not also its appointed round of seasons, and its final termination? Is it not also fraught with good and blessing, which sum up in one grand result at the end? Is there not then also to come a thanksgiving and glorious harvest-home, of which all preceding festivals are but the feeble types and prophecies? And what is the text but a record of an inspired vision of that day, and of the transcendent blessedness which it is to celebrate?

Will it then be an inharmonious thing, a jar or chill upon the grateful ardor of this our earthly thanksgiving, to bring into it some contemplations of that sublime thanksgiving, when all angels and all ransomed men shall join to express their immortal gratitude over the consummated harvest of the whole grand year of time? Earthly indeed must be the feeling, and very unfitting for that heaven for which we hope, if such should be the effect. Accompany me then with attentive hearts, as I proceed with some brief consideration of *The Harvest-Home of Heaven—the grand Thanksgiving of Eternity.*

Three things present themselves:

I. *The Scene where it is celebrated;*

II. *The Bounties which it celebrates;*

III. *The People who share in the celebration.*

I. Observe, then, the Scene where yonder thanksgiving day is celebrated.

To-day, we still find ourselves in our earthly city, rejoicing in the old heavens and the old earth, and the blessing they have been to us. We rejoice and give thanks, that these heavens have not ceased to move over us and over our fields with their glorious procession of sun and moon, and stars and clouds, making the furrows wet with showers, blessing the springing crops, and bringing to plentiful ripeness the various fruits after their kind. We bless God for the favorable seasons which these skies have again tempered for us, that they have not shut up their timely moisture,

nor sent out upon us blasting heat, destructive tempests, overflowing floods, nor hail to destroy the ripening harvests, nor pestilence to torment our bodies and destroy our lives.

We rejoice and give thanks, that our old mother earth has still held out, and that the Divine covenant made with her in Noah's days has not failed, but that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, have continued in their appointed order, making our bread and water sure. The husbandmen have sown and the reapers have gathered, and no disturbances of land or sea have intervened to hinder or destroy the riches of her maternal products.

We rejoice and give thanks that the city of our earthly homes, in which we have so many important interests of family, and business, and property, and life, still continues to stand, and grow, and prosper; that its peace and order have been preserved; that its homes have been unvisited with plague; that its streets have been ever busy with profitable trade; that its firesides have been kept in so much happiness; and that no great calamity has befallen it to desolate its beauty, or to destroy its excellence.

But, to everything there is a time. These rejoicings and thanksgivings over the present heavens and the present earth will have their end. This whole present scene of things shall wax old as doth a garment; and, as a vesture, God says he will fold it up, and it shall be changed. No city of this world is to continue always. "The day of

the Lord will come in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . All these things shall be dissolved." They had a beginning, and they will have an end. Yet, it shall not be an utter end; but only an end for another and more glorious beginning. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Our text tells of them, and of another and holier city, the "New Jerusalem." There is yet to come a "restitution of all things"—a "regeneration" which shall deliver the whole corruption-bound creation from its groans. He that sitteth upon the throne saith, "Behold I make all things new." And John, in prophetic vision, was privileged to see that finished work, and has put on record what he saw, and here it stands written: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

"*A new heaven*"—a sky, and clouds, and atmosphere, of higher beauty and more genial temperature than those which now surround us with their loveliness—a heaven which no more robes itself in storms and blackness, nor flashes with the thunderbolts of wrath, nor casts forth plagues of hail, and fire and judgment, nor gives lurking-places for the devil and his angels, nor is ever again disturbed with omens of evil, or commotions breeding disaster to the dwellers under them.

"*And a new earth*"—one which no longer smarts

and smokes under the curse of sin, needing to be torn with hooks and irons in order to the bringing forth of its fruits,—an earth where thorns and thisties no longer infest the ground, nor serpents hiss among the flowers, nor wild beasts bent on destruction, hide in the forests,—an earth whose sod is never cut with graves, whose soil is never moistened with tears or saturated with human blood, whose fields are never blasted by unpropitious seasons, whose inhabitants never say, "I am sick," whose ways are never marked with funeral processions or glutted with armed men on their way to war, but whose hills ever flow with salvation, and whose valleys ever resound with uninterrupted joy,—an earth which glows from end to end with the blessedness of Paradise restored.

And a new city—a heaven-built homeplace for the saints of God, decked and adorned with jewelry and glory "as a bride adorned for her husband," where the Church shall rest from her long contest with ignorance and sin, and be comforted forever with the light and love of her Redeemer. John saw that city, and tells of it in terms which almost blind us with their brightness. It is not built up from earth, but comes down out of heaven, blazing with the glory of God, and girt with radiance jasper-hued but clear as crystal. It is a "great city," eighteen hundred miles in length, and in breadth, and in height, with foundations and walls of precious jewels, gates of pearls, and streets of gold, so pure as to be like transparent glass, and needing no light of sun or moon, because illuminated

with the eternal light and glory of God and of the Lamb—the true "eternal city"—the imperishable metropolis of the new heaven and the new earth.

And there, in that renovated and brightened scene of things—in that blessed order when these present heavens and this present earth have passed their grand *palingenesia*, shall be that greater, higher, holier, final thanksgiving, of which these days of earthly praise remind us. And if in these old heavens and this old earth, and in this earthly city, there be so much to stir our hearts and open our lips with songs of thankfulness, how shall it be when once that new creation opens up its beauties, and that golden Jerusalem has become our everlasting home!

II. Observe also the Bounties which it celebrates.

To-day we call to mind a list of manifold mercies vouchsafed during the past year. We think of the rich harvests which a kind providence has permitted us to reap, of barns stored with plenty, of garners filled, of rich rewards to industry, and of ten thousand gracious gifts realized from the hand of heavenly Goodness.

We rejoice and give thanks, that hitherto the Lord hath helped us—that he has preserved our lives, our friends, our comforts, our hopes—that we have bread, and can eat it in peace—that we have not been forsáken, left destitute, bereft of reason, deprived of health—that by the good favor of God it is as well with us as it is.

We rejoice and give thanks, that this world's goods, though ever in peril, and ever liable to make to themselves wings and fly away, with all the losses that have occurred, and with all the stringency and trouble which have befallen the channels of circulation, are still so plentiful, and that they have not been more seriously diminished, and rendered still less available—that we have had enough for our necessities—and that opportunity has not departed for honest effort to earn and obtain its bread.

We rejoice and give thanks, that our religious privileges have not been abridged or taken from us—that infidelity, and falsehood, a skeptical science, and a reigning unbelief, have not been able to destroy our blessed Gospel, and that nothing has been permitted to close our sanctuaries against us, to silence the preached word, or to hinder the free and undisturbed observance of God's holy ordinances, or to put any constraint upon us in the pursuit of our convictions and our worship of our Maker—that the gracious offers of salvation still sound in our ears—that the precious Bible is still in our hands, in our houses, and in our schools—that the means and hope of eternal life have been so richly preserved unto us—and that the fountains of living water still flow to quench our thirst and wash away our sins.

All these are great and precious bounties, for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful to the kind Father in heaven from whom they come. But these are only the earthly and imperfect im-

ages and preintimations of the sublimer bounties to be celebrated when that other thanksgiving day shall come. Hear what the inspired seer saith: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." How joyously such words ring out over this world of sorrow and unrest! And of what blessed things they tell in the coming harvest-home of heaven!

Here is first, redemption from all evil. "God shall wipe away all tears;"—"*God* shall," even the Almighty One himself. Human hands are very poor at drying tears. We may wipe away one flood, but another comes which we cannot wipe away. Earthly power, however loving and kind, can go but a little way toward binding up broken hearts. Only God can touch the deep sources of sorrow, or effectually dry up the streams which issue from them. He alone can apply the hand so as to take away the springs of grief. And he it is who engages to undertake the case. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted," saith the Lord.

"And God shall wipe away *all tears*"—ALL, for they be many. There be tears of poverty and misfortune, such as Job and Lazarus wept,—tears of bereaved affection, such as Mary and Martha shed over their brother's tomb,—tears of sympathy and mercy, such as Jeremiah and Jesus wept over

Jerusalem,—tears of persecuted innocence, such as those with which David oft bedewed his couch,—tears of soul-sorrow and repentance, such as flowed from Peter's eyes, or coursed the cheeks of Mary Magdalene. But all these, and whatsoever other sort are wept on earth, shall then be dried forever. God will wipe them away.

"*And there shall be no more death.*" While writing this sentence, there came a telegram from a father in a distant town, notifying me of the death of his only son, and asking of me to come and speak some words of comfort at the funeral. Not half an hour previous, a messenger was at my door telling me of the death of a sister, and urging me to be present at her burial, with such consolation for the friends as our holy religion has to give. And so death is abroad alway, making sad havoc of our homes and domestic circles, filling the world with "farewells of the dying, and mourning for the dead." Even "the cup of thanksgiving" is mingled with tears over the fell doings of this great foe of human peace. But death also shall die. And when that high Festival of the new heavens and earth shall come, one item of its grand thanksgiving shall be, that "Death is swallowed up in victory," all funerals over, and such things as graves forever done away in immortality.

"*And there shall be no more sorrow.*" Thousandfold are the heartaches which earth's children here are made to feel. Choose what path of life they will, trouble follows them like their shadow,

and no resolve can shake it off. It is the common heirloom of humanity, and its records are in royal halls as well as in the huts of poverty. To the outward eye, the lives of some may seem all comfort, evenness, and sunshine; but each heart knoweth its own bitterness, and martyrs suffer where there are no visible fagots and flames. But when that heavenly thanksgiving day shall come, anxieties, vexations, and tormenting fears will have passed away, hearts will no longer bleed in secret, and the cold shadows no more fall on sensitive affection, nor killing frosts any more destroy the flowers of human peace. The whole cup of sorrow will have passed from man never again to be touched by his lips.

"*And there shall be no more crying.*" Sore complaining is the commonest sound on earth. Man comes into the world with a cry, and goes out of it with a groan; and all between is more or less intoned with wailing. The cry of pain and passion—the cry of fear and strife—the cry of wrong and oppression, the cry of want and helplessness—the cry of disappointment and blasted hopes—the cry of weariness and disability—the cry of suffering innocence and of neglected orphanage—or some other cry of distress, is in our ears day and night. Every breeze brings it. But the halleluias of the glad harvest-home of heaven shall drown it out forever.

"*Neither shall there be any more pain.*" Oh, the racking torments to which these mortal bodies are exposed! Oh, the ills, and aches, and sharp dis-

tresses that come upon us through these earthly tenements! But they shall come no more when that high festival begins; for it is the jubilee of everlasting redemption from all evil.

But it is also a jubilee of glorious fruition of good. "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely," saith the Lord.

We thank God now for wine and milk—for bread to eat and water to drink; but there is a better product. What "the water of life" is, we may not fully know; but it is a water which he that drinketh shall never thirst again, nor ever show symptoms of age or decay. Though years heap on years, and centuries on centuries, and cycles on cycles, they shall never dry up the moisture of immortal youth which those blessed waters give. They are God's life-waters which make glad eternity, and which make eternally glad.

And with them God gives the still higher good—the sum of all good—even Himself. The great voice out of heaven sings, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Here is the key of all blessedness, the crown of all glory—union and communion with God. To be with God, to behold him face to face, to possess him as our own, to have him as a living, ever-present, conscious, overshadowing, felt heart-joy; this is the height, and essence, and coronal of all the

promises, the focal point in which they meet, the fruition of all the highest possible desires of man. Therein eternal life reaches its fullest bloom and sublimest blessedness. This is salvation eternally perfected. And this is the imperishable treasure for the working out of which all the years of grace are given, and which makes up the superlative theme of the Thanksgiving of eternity.

III. Observe now the people who share in that high celebration.

The thanksgiving of to-day is for the entire nation. The call to it has gone forth from the seat of highest authority, and is echoed back from the seats of the lower governments. President and State Executives unite in inviting us to our temples, and to devout and joyful praises to our God. And God himself, in the good things which his providence has given and preserved unto us, prompts and urges to a like solemnity. Not only the cultivator of the fields has reason to give thanks this day. God's mercies have fallen on all orders. The whole State, the whole nation, has occasion to rejoice and give praise to the eternal King. Even from those who believe not in him, and consume his bounties like brutes which run and contend for the mast but lift not a thought to its source, are still under like bonds with the most devout to acknowledge and bless the Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. The bounties of the year have come alike upon the evil and the good; and all are this

day invited to the house of the Lord, and welcomed to the joy of our grateful feast.

So likewise are we all invited and called to the blessedness of the great harvest-home of heaven. The whole people of the earth, without distinction of language, or nation, or color, have the proclamation from the King of kings and Lord of lords, and the same re-echoed by all his authorities under him, to come, and enter in, and share the happiness of that new creation time which is to last forever. But will all that hear the invitation be found there at the last? There be many absent to-day, who care not whether God be thanked for his goodness or not. They have no sense or appreciation of the Divine goodness in the bounties on which they live. Can we suppose that such are on the way to the blessed thanksgiving of heaven? They sow to the flesh, and of the flesh, and from that there is no reaping but corruption. And even among those this day assembled in God's house, there is reason to fear that there be some to whom the whole thing is a mere ceremony, or a way, perhaps, of spending an hour agreeably, having no heart for the service, and with no soul-feeling of real reverence or true worship. Can we regard such as on the way to the heavenly feast? The New Jerusalem is a holy city, and all who fail in interest in God's service here would be out of place there. The blessed redemption from all evil is for those who thirst for God's waters of life, and overcome in the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. For others, there cometh

no such redemption. "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part," not in the New Jerusalem, but "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The only people who share in the blessed harvest-home of heaven, are God's people—such a people as he has had in every age—a people called out from the world, marked with holy signs, set apart unto God, and signalized in faith, and hope, and life as those whose Fatherland is heaven. Such were the patriarchs of former ages, who saw the promises, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Such were the prophets, who prophesied beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, and searched and inquired diligently into those blessed things which also the angels desire to look into. Such were those in the early ages of the Church who held fast the name of Jesus, and denied not his faith even when the fires roared around them, and the blood of confessors flowed like water. Such were those who sighed and cried through the gloom of the middle ages over the abominations that were done, and shook the torch of Jehovah's truth afresh that the nations in darkness might see and live. And such are those in every land, of every tongue, of every age, who show by their lives and testimony that they seek a heavenly country, and look for a city whose maker

and builder is God. Be they Africans among the burning sands, or Finns among the perpetual snows; be they Arabs in their tents, Druses in their mountains, or sons of Japhet in their costly homes; be they deep in obscurity, unknown to the world around them, or high up the steeps of renown, with their every movement blazoned over the earth;—if they have turned from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, they are the children of God, and on their way to join the glad harvest-home of the new creation in the New Jerusalem.

And what a glorious assembly rises to our view as we look forward to that mighty celebration! How grand its worship! How splendid its praises! How sweet its songs!

> Hark! the sound of holy voices
> Chanting at the crystal sea:
> "Halleluia, Halleluia,
> Halleluia, Lord, to Thee!"

Blessed company! Blessed Festival! Would God that we were there!

For the present, however, we still have to do with the old earth and heavens. How long we may have to do with them, none of us can tell. Symptoms of change and dissolution around and in us are showing themselves ever more and more.

> The old
> And crazy earth has had her shaking fits
> More frequent, and foregone her usual rest,
> And nature seems with dim and sickly eye
> To wait the close of all.

> The sun in the heavens is languid and pale,
> And feeble and few are the fruits of the vale,
> And the hearts of the nations are failing for fear,—
> For the world is grown old, and judgment is near!

At any rate, our years are rapidly being numbered, and these mortal lives of ours are gliding away. The places that know us now will soon know us no more. Nevertheless, for the present we are here. These heavens have not yet rolled away from us, and this earth has not failed from beneath our feet, nor we from its surface. We are here, trying to stir up our hearts in grateful tribute to our God that his good providence has not forsaken us. Nor should it fail to deepen our gratitude and our praises to be thus assured that, when this world shall no more serve us, there is another in reserve, whose green turf hides no dismal tombs, and where there are none that weep, or die, or fear, or suffer; that God is not ashamed to be called our God, and that he hath prepared for us a city; that, as we are here together to praise him in the poor languid services of the old earth, there remains to us a hope and opportunity of coming together to another sublimer and eternal thanksgiving, where God himself in unveiled glory shall be with us and wipe away these tears, and abolish death and sorrow, and crying and pain shall be no more. For then the former things shall have passed away.

O the blessedness of that high world which the Gospel opens to our contemplation and our hopes! How our souls yearn to enter upon it!

With what eager joy does faith stretch out its hands to possess it!

Region of Life and Light!
  Land of the Good whose earthly toils are o'er;
Nor frost nor heat may blight
  Thy vernal beauty, Fertile Shore,
  Yielding thy blessed Fruit for evermore!

Might but a little part,
  A wandering breath of that high Melody,
Descend into my heart,
  And change it till it be
  Transformed and swallowed up, O Love, in Thee!

END OF VOL. II.

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